CHANDA JHA

Makers of Indian Literature

CHANDA JHA

by

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PREFACE

This short monograph on Chanda Jha is intended to introduce him to readers who have no access to Maithili, a language spoken by more than 3 crores of people in Bihar. Since the cultural, political and literary background of Chanda Jha has not received adequate treatment up till now I have ventured to deal with it as best as was possible within the limited space available to me. I am conscious that I have touched upon too many problems, however briefly, only in the hope that scholars in Maithili and outside will deal with them in greater detail later on.

I have tried also to give English rendering of the verses or songs of Chanda Jha. Conscious as I was of my imperfection in translation, I have also given the original verses in Roman script for such readers as may be interested in knowing the original.

Since most of what I considered technical terms have been explained by me in the body of the book, I did not consider it necessary to add separate notes on them.

I take this opportunity to express my gratefulness to Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi who asked me to write this monograph. I also acknowledge my gratefulness in particular to Dr. B.B. Misra, Dr. Jatashankar Jha, Maithili Akademi, Patna from whose works I have quoted and to Sri Prabhas Kumar Choudhary of Pindarucha, who procured for me a copy of the photograph of Chanda Jha.

—Jayadeva Misra

PIONEER OF MODERN AGE

There can be little doubt that in some ways Chandranatha Jha, Chanda Jha as he was called, was a pioneer in the field of Maithili literature. He was born in the early part of the nineteenth century. By this time, several of the Indian provinces were already aglow with the light of English education. In this connection the first name that comes to our mind is Bengal. Bengal was perhaps the earliest and the potent beneficiary of English education and yet it is a fact that the Mithila region, which is a part of Bihar, and for that matter, was a part of Bengal, did not know then what this English education was like.

The first man belonging to the Mithila region who could earn a living outside Bihar on the basis of English education was perhaps Dr. Ganganatha Jha. He was born in 1871. Roughly speaking, about 1870 the old prejudice against English education began to wear off. But by then Chanda Jha had already become 39 years old, *i.e.,* past the age when he could avail himself of an opportunity to learn English.

Against this backdrop, it is a marvel how Chanda Jha could imbibe western spirit and was able to do all that he did. Apart from his valuable contribution to Maithili prose, which was then non-existent except in such forms as letters, memoirs, business documents, in the field of verse writing, besides producing hosts of songs, lyrics, bhajans etc., he gave us his *Mithila Bhasha Ramayana,* a full-fledged *mahakavya* on the classical pattern.

We have to bear in mind that about the time Chanda Jha lived, Mithila region was steeped in classical culture, untrammelled by western influence. There was a clear lack of inclination to understand the common man or his language. But Chanda Jha seems to have understood both in a great measure. Throughout the gamut of his writings there is as much a tendency to voice the feelings of a man in the hamlet as there is an

inclination to use the idioms of his life. Indeed, there was hardly a subject or topic in the life around him which was considered by him so low or mean as not to attract his notice and receive literary treatment at his hands.

Chanda Jha belonged to village Pindaruch in the district of Darbhanga. This was a village full of zamindars. As a Kulin, his great-grandfather, Lala Jha married the daughter of Nityanand Choudhary, a prosperous man, and came perhaps to settle in the village. But by the time Chanda Jha came on the scene, the relationship had become distant. The great-grandfather of Chanda Jha or his grandfather, Ranjan Jha, probably the former, who came to settle in the village must have been held in high esteem by the children of Nityanand Chaudhary not only as a close relation but also as one belonging to a family higher in social status than their own. But gradually the old esteem wore off leaving young Chanda Jha face to face with the stark reality of having to live in the midst of rich people distantly related to him. But the inferiority of his economic status could not kill the independence of his mind and he freely lampooned the zamindars if and when a need for doing so arose. There are quite a few verses of his in which he has criticised the zamindars and their henchmen. Some of these verses are current in the neighbourhood of Pindaruch even today. But now only a few persons in the locality can readily identify as to who the persons thus criticised were. Some people say that the poet was not judicious in his criticism and directed it towards quarters where it was least deserved. At any rate, this was the main reason why Chanda Jha had to leave his original home at Pindaruch to go to Tharhi, falling under the present Madhubani district to which his father-in-law Bira Misra belonged.

From what we know of Chanda Jha it is clear that in spite of the fact that he did not have any training except in Sanskrit and served systematically under one rich patron or another, he was possessed of quite a generous but sensitive heart. He could react to a disagreeable situation as readily as he could undertake a labour of love, if it satisfied him emotionally. Chanda Jha rebelled against constraints imposed by rich or influential people

first at Pindaruch and later on at Tharhi, but he could readily take all pains to serve the cause he held dear to his heart. One such cause was certainly the service to his mother tongue.

In Maithili literature we have special reasons to attach importance to Chanda Jha. He was not only a poet of proved literary merit but also a writer who made significant contribution to Maithili prose. But for him, we could not have the translation of the *Purusa-pariksha* in Maithili. True, his prose is chaotic in form with more or less a tendency to substitute, wherever possible, one Sanskrit word in the original by another word in Maithili, little caring as to what shape the sentence would finally take, but all the same the attempt was worthwhile considering the fact that it was the first major attempt in the direction. It is also true that in writing poetry as well he suffered from a disadvantage in the sense that he did not have at his disposal a medium rendered pliable enough to suit a composition of a sustained order. It is a fact that before coming to compose an epic like the *Ramayana,* he had tried his hand at such stray writings as satire, lampoon, bhajan, and indeed, all this had given him a sort of confidence, but after all, they were random attempts hardly calling forth any genius for coordination and taking note of vicissitudes of life. It was a new venture he was undertaking now and it required of him to draw upon all his reserve of ingenuity and knowledge of Sanskrit classics.

No doubt, he had before him in Maithili the examples of such masters as Vidyapati and Govindadas a but considering his classical training, it is doubtful how far he had acquainted himself with the traditions of vernacular literature. So far as the writings of Manabodha and Nandipati are concerned, we have to bear in mind that they differed from the writings of Chanda Jha materially. Manabodha and Nandipati employed the language almost as they spoke it. There were few occasions either for the poets to write in any sort of dense style or for the readers to seek it. It was a sort of unsophisticated writing addressed to a sort of unsophisticated readers. Perhaps it suited their aim all right confined as it was to tickling the heart of the common man by recourse to simple, though telling, narrative of the familiar Krishna episodes. Manabodha and Nandipati, it seems, never

aimed at any literary distinction as is clear from their adherence to a low literary tone, avoiding a classical style, even *Tatsama* words, to the best of their abilities. Within their limits their works have evident merit, but by their very nature they would not go very high. But Chanda Jha had ostensibly a high aim both as a classicist and as one who had taken up deliberately a high task. It was more or less a densely structured composition Chanda Jha was attempting now. In the new venture every word was not expected to yield full meaning at once. It was to be used in a big context, and one was required to read sentence after sentence, indeed page after page, in order to grasp the underlying meaning. With his classical background it was expected of him to produce a work that could answer the classical norms established through centuries of practice. In this way his whole reputation was at stake. The fact that he was asked by Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh to compose the *Ramayana* added to his responsibility. The *Ramayana*, when completed, was not only to satisfy the writer or his patron, who could very well distinguish a good work from a bad one, but also a galaxy of classical scholars in the court and outside. For all this evidently he was not prepared from before. But it is to the credit of the poet that by dint of his natural gift of expression he accomplished a task that looked pretty impossible in the beginning.

Taking into consideration Chanda Jha's social and cultural background, it is natural that the bulk of his writings should have a religious overtone. In a society full of religiosity, he could not have fumbled for long in order to fix upon Siva as an appropriate subject-matter for his devotional songs. This special type of song, traditionally known as *Nachari* or *Maheshavani* describes the incongruous and yet fascinating behaviour of Lord Siva, particularly in relation to his family life and household. The mind of the simplest section of the Mithila society had attuned itself to it. The *Nacharis* and *Mahesavanis* had long popularised among the people the wayward but extremely kind image of Lord Siva, who, though himself a destitute, could bestow the choicest blessings on his devotees. As the common belief went, whenever in distress, one had only to seek His

mercy in order to be relieved of it. This picture of Siva suited Chanda Jha well as he himself was a victim of misfortunes throughout his life. Here again if he suffered from the lack of a suitable medium of expression, he more than compensated for it by charging his utterance with peculiar fervour and piognancy.

The troubles from which Chanda Jha suffered were partly man-made and partly providential. The pin-pricks of zamindars of his native village Pindaruch made him leave the village for good. At the village of his adoption, namely Tharhi, he had also to leave the site where he built his original home. This he had to do mainly because two of his sons died there one after another.

Situated as he was physically and mentally, he had to fall back upon the mercy of the all generous Siva. Although born of desperate and gloomy moments of his life, in some of his devotional compositions we have the best pieces of poetry. The poignancy of feelings, coupled with a peculiar felicity of expression, have made them pure gems. It is doubtful if we could have such satisfying pieces of poetry except for the crucible to which fate had put him.

It is an axiomatic truth that a truly new literature could not be produced in a modern Indian language except under western influence. But it is a fact that Mithila was very late in coming under it. In the nineteenth century, Mithila formed a part of Bengal, and Bengal was one of the earliest beneficiaries of English education. But situated as Mithila was, it could not reap the harvest that was so much in evidence in the adjoining province of Bengal. One of the reasons for this difference was almost the ready acceptance of new education as a repository of western culture by Bengal and its rather rejection, quite for some time, by Mithila.

It may be of profit here to review the spread of English education in the eastern region with particular reference to Bengal n order to understand the real position of Mithila about the time of Chanda Jha.

Evidently the British established their sway in Bengal, and for the matter of that in the whole of eastern region, following their victory in the battle of Plassey in 1757. But for years this remained a distant event and Mithila region could not feel any

impact. In 1764, Clive secured the Dewani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from the Mughal emperor and then the region came formally under the British rule. But even this change in administration had very little to do with the daily life of an average man who was mostly illiterate and little concerned with anything beyond his chores of humdrum existence. Really it was with the establishment of zamindari in 1790 that an ordinary man in the Mithila region began gradually to realise that a change of some consequence had taken place. But here also it has to be clearly remembered that it took many years for a settled government to come into existence due mostly to disturbances by the Napalese.

Once the Britishers knew that they were reasonably firm at the saddle, they at once thought of attending to the problems of administration. Evidently, administration needed a reasonable means of communication between the rulers and the ruled and English could not assume this role for the simple reason that it was a foreign language with absolutely no base in society. No doubt, quite early they had an idea of spreading English among the Indians but they were not slow in realising that whatever they might do to promote it, it would remain confined to a very small section of society. These handful of English knowing persons could be important in view of their role as standard-bearers of western culture in numerous fields or as constituting the 'elite' of the new society but the administration of necessity was bound to concern itself with a circle much bigger than this. It has to reach out to the ordinary people. But this could not be done except with the help of the language the people at large spoke or used in their daily intercourse.

Unfortunately, the vernaculars of the time were not in good shape. In spite of the fact that most of these vernaculars had quite a rich past in so far as poetry was concerned, they had no prose worth the name. This had its effect on poetry writing as well. If we look at the poetry of the closing years of the nineteenth century, we would at once be convinced of its looseness, artificiality and lack of directness in utterance.

All this was due perhaps to the reason that the literature of the period, which consisted chiefly of the verses, was modelled

on Sanskrit poetry of the time which clearly partook of the characteristics that go generally with a decadent age.

2. WESTERN INFLUENCE THROUGH BENGAL

By the turn of the century, however, events of great literary importance took place in the neighbouring province of Bengal. In 1800 A.D., the Fort William college was established in Calcutta with the avowed purpose of producing works of prose in modern Indian languages. Necessarily the effort remained confined to such languages as were at the moment considered important from the administrative point of view, namely Bengali, Hindi and Urdu. This was the first deliberate attempt at producing prose literature in modern Indian languages, apart from what little the missionaries had done previously. It was clearly realised by those connected with the Fort William college that the first requirement of a modern language was to have a straightforward prose with a capacity to express ideas lucidly and correctly. This effort at evolving a good prose evoked good response in Bengal and we have quite early a host of writers attempting their hands at it.

If western influence can be taken as responsible for promotion of vernacular literature, there was every reason why this should begin in Bengal, particularly Calcutta. Leaving aside other considerations, the very number of Europeans living in Calcutta was astounding. For quite some years the settlement of Fort William remained the hub of the European population in India. In 1828, out of the total population of 2,016 as many as 1,595 Europeans lived in Bengal, especially Calcutta. In the same year Madras had a European population of 116 and Bombay 236. The remaining 69 Europeans lived in other parts of the country. Dr. B.B. Misra has hinted that the presence of different categories of Europeans in Calcutta was the first major factor responsible for coming into existence of the liberal atmosphere there which ultimately percolated to the countryside. What the schools and colleges did was possible only after the Europeans had, by their presence, done the preliminaries. Dr. Misra says:

"Calcutta was in fact the first among the presidency towns to become effectively influenced by European ideas and institutions. These filtered downwards to provincial or district levels through the media of civil servants and commercial residents, who operated through the agency of the company's courts and factories respectively. To these may be added Christian missionaries, free merchants, and European planters, who likewise carried liberal traditions in the interior of the country. Schools and colleges came later."*

It may be noted here that innovations in vernacular literature could come only after the mind was impregnated with the new ideas. It was fortunate for Bengal that it had in the beginning uch leaders as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Madhab Chandra Mallick etc., whose catholicity of approach and outlook was astonishing considering the time in which they lived. Their attitude was almost like a fresh breeze in the midst of suffocating and tainted wind of irrationality and blind faith. More than anything else, this was responsible for the onward march of Bengal to correct social and cultural evils and turn Bengali society from a backward looking one to forward looking. The position has been summed up very appropriately by Dr. R.C. Majumdar.

"Al Baruni remarked about 1000 A.D. that the Hindus kept themselves aloof from the outside world and were ignorant of arts and sciences of the west. This defect of the Hindus was equally evident 800 years later. But great changes came in the beginning of the nineteenth century in the shape of introduction of English education. This English education opened the floodgates of western ideas which almost overwhelmed them in the beginning. But fifty years of English education brought greater changes in the minds of the educated Hindus of Bengal than the previous thousand years." Dr. R.C. Majumdar has noted how it was the most opportune moment in which the western influence came. To quote him again:

"It was the age of French Illumination when the spirit of nationalism and individualism dominated European thought. It

*Dr. B.B. Misra : *Indian Middle Classes*, P. 75.

proclaimed the supremacy of reason over faith, of individual conscience over outside authority and brought in its train new conceptions of social justice and political rights. A new ideology suddenly burst forth upon the static life, moulded for centuries by a fixed set of religious ideas and social convention."

Indeed, it cannot be gainsaid that the revolt of the mind against dogmas, blind traditionalism is the first condition for the release of thought and conscience which lies at the root of progress in all fields, and literature is not an exception to this. This state of mind as a precursor of modernity in literature could not come before the people betook themselves to studying European literature through the establishment of modern schools and colleges.

Bengal had the advantage of English education quite in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was born in 1774. He could not avail himself of English education in his early years for the simple reason that it was non-existent. But very soon he realised that English education was a must which could be ignored only at a great peril to society. In his later years he acquired sufficient knowledge of English, apart from his excellent grounding in Sanskrit and Persian, so as to express himself pretty well in English. What was perhaps more important than this was his realisation that English education was a must if the progress of the society as a whole was to be aimed at It may be worth mentioning that as early as 1823 he raised his voice against establishment of a Sanskrit college in Calcutta in preference to a college of the western type. In protest Raja Ram Mohan Roy sent a letter to Lord Amherst which, among other things, said:

"This seminary (similar in character to those which existed in Europe before the time of Lord Becon) can only be expected to load the mind of the youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or to the society. The pupils there will acquire what was known 2000 years ago with the addition of vain and empty subtleties since then produced by speculative men such as is already commonly taught in all parts of India." Proceeding the Raja pointed out:

"Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness. But since the improvement of the native population is the object of the government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing Mathematics, Chemistry etc."

In spite of this protest a Sanskrit college was duly established in Calcutta. But the protests from the enlightened Bengalis continued. The protest of Madhab Chandra Mullick was perhaps the most forthright and strong. He, in protest, said:

"If we intend to perpetuate the irrational religious ideas that have fettered our mind for such a long time, we would never have established the Hindu free school."

But all those protests seem to have fallen on deaf ears. The English authorities went ahead with their original plan and the Sanskrit college was established in Calcutta with full provision for teaching only the traditional subjects. But the protests strengthened the authorities in their belief that utmost stress had to be laid on modern education in spite of what the traditionalists might say about it. It was not for nothing that a resolution adopted during the regime of Lord William Bentick (1835), among other things, said:

"The great object of British government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone."

Apart from protests lodged by men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Madhab Chandra Mullick and others against perpetuation of Sanskrit, what encouraged the Britishers to proceed ahead to promote English education was the fact that about this time practically the whole of Bengal had passed under the spell of Englishmen. By about the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the stamp of western culture on them had become so pronounced that the Bengalis could at once be distinguished from the rest of Indians. In 1823, Heber, the Lord Bishop of Calcutta, noted that 'the Hindoostanis had begun to regard the Bengalis as no less foreigner than the English.' It is unfortunate that the Bengalis who came to Mithila region as officers did not make a distinction between Mithila and other provinces, although in the past,

particularly in the medieval period, Mithila and Bengal seemed to constitute a single cultural unit—the shastric controversy raised in the one dividing the other also more or less on similar lines. About the Bengalis of the period Dr. R.C. Majumdar has observed:

"The horizon of the Bengalis . . . . was limited by the frontiers of their own province and they felt no concern for the rest of the country."

It seems the English education had carved the Bengalis into a separate people and the Bengali officers who came in the wake of the expansion of the British rule considered the people of other regions, including the people of Mithila, as belonging to an inferior race and therefore unworthy of getting the same English education which they had received and which, they considered, had the potentiality of making the Biharis their equals. Any way, it was most fortunate that about this period in Bengal a man like Ramakrishna was born who could easily combine extreme catholicity of outlook with intense Indianness. His influence saved the Bengalis from an obvious pitfall, and Bengal went on making progress in English education and modernity without forsaking its age-old cultural moorings.

We have already noted that the spread of English education was always linked with contact with the Englishman. This was the reason why Bengal had in the early nineteenth century English education in plenty. The policy of the government to push ahead their plan to spread western literature and science, coupled with the presence of a vast number of Englishmen in Bengal, had a spectacular effect on that area. It appears to have been a policy with the government to make a beginning with the establishment of vernacular schools and gradually to convert them into Anglo-vernacular ones. No doubt, as noted by Adam about the year 1835, some vernacular schools were also opened in Tirhut, but they practically languished chiefly due to unwillingness on the part of the upper class people to send their children to them. On the contrary, we find the same year as many as 25 schools making satisfactory progress in Calcutta alone.

In 1836 Macaulay noted that in Calcutta alone about 1400 students were found reading English. This spread of English

education in Bengal had its inevitable effect on the growth of vernacular literature. By 1850 Bengali had as many as seven journals or periodicals doing more or less satisfactory business. After 1854 the progress became all the more impressive, following the famous despatch of Sir Charles Wood which laid particular stress on 'the improvement and far wider extension of both English and vernacular'. Under the new scheme the vernacular was to play a double role: it was to develop as literature in order to provide literary taste through mother tongue as also to serve as an effective agent for carrying home to the people the knowledge contained in the European languages, particularly English. It was almost a total effort at revolutionising the mind of the people, and it was fortunate that the Bengalis availed themselves of the opportunity in a considerable measure. An idea as to the progress made in this direction by the Bengalis can be had from a report sent to the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in 1855 which pointed out that in the preceding 50 years as many as 515 persons had produced writings in Bengali. Of them, it was noted, 160 persons were already dead. About the same period there were 46 presses printing Bengali books. Also 19 periodicals, with a total of 8,100 copies, were in circulation. During the period of 10 years preceding 1853 about 2,00,000 Bengali books had already come out of the press. English education given to the people was important enough, but what was more important than this was that it was responsible for building up the vernacular literature of Bengal and preparing competent teachers who might, in course of time, replace the incompetent ones appointed at the initial stage. This was quite in accord with the views of Adam who, after due examination, had found deplorable state of ignorance among the people in spite of an abundance of indigenous institutions. Dr. B. B. Misra notes :

"The original object was to produce, through the medium of English, a class of competent persons who stage by stage were to build up a vernacular literature and supplant incompetent teachers, the idea being to improve the quality and content of vernacular education. This the government proposed to do by securing infiltration of western literature and science through

the agency of the upper and middle classes whom it put on the priority list."

The establishment of the Calcutta university in 1857 was the culmination of the efforts that were being made systematically for a number of years to have for Bengal a modern centre of learning. This was as much in fulfilment of the object of the British government as of the cherished desire of the enlightened Bengalis. It has already been noted that Bihar was then a part and parcel of Bengal and something had to be done in this area as well. Consequently, apart from schools established earlier, Patna college was started in 1863 as a centre of higher education. But important as it was, it was quite inadequate to meet the needs of a big area like Bihar.

The inadequate arrangement for English education in Bihar had its impact in several fields. If the regional languages, including Maithili, could not develop on modern lines, the disadvantage in some other fields was no less glaring. In this connection, Dr. B.B. Misra's quotation from Thacker's New Calcutta Directory for the year 1858 is interesting. According to this, about that time, out of 140 Hindu judicial officers in the subordinate province of Bihar only seven were non-Bengalis, the remaining 133 being all Bengalis. Similarly out of 48 Hindu Deputy Magistrates and Deputy Collectors, 46 were Bengalis. The position could not be otherwise, considering the lead the Bengalis had over others in the field of English education. It is, however, to be remembered that the inadequacy here on the social or economic side was nothing when compared to the loss suffered on the literary side.

Unsatisfactory as the position of English education in Bihar as a whole was, the position in the region lying to the north of the Ganga was all the more unsatisfactory. The first ever Anglo-vernacular school established in this region was at Muzaffarpur in 1844. Subsequently more schools were opened, quite a number of them in the Mithila region proper at the cost of the Darbhanga Raj, but, for one reason or the other, the English education could not make headway for quite some years. In the beginning it was a natural apathy for a system of education which was completely foreign. Then there was the fear of conversion to Christianity. And lastly, the education that was

imparted in the schools had absolutely no relevance to the life situation of the people.

As early as 1835 Lord William Bentick had emphasised that all available funds be utilised to spread English education among the people, but nothing particular appears to have been done in Bihar in this direction. In 1854, Sir Charles Wood laid stress not only on English but also on vernacular. But nothing was done to teach the 'genuine' vernacular of the land. In its place what was erroneously called 'Hindi' began to be taught pretty indifferently as would be clear from the fact that there were neither proper books nor proper teachers. This was in addition to the natural aversion to an unfamiliar language. Not unnaturally the people developed almost total dislike for the education that was being imparted in the schools.

3. SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

About the middle of the nineteenth century in Mithila some important developments took place. Maharaja Rudra Singh having died, Maharaja Maheshwar Singh ascended the throne of Darbhanga Raj in 1850. It was only after seven years that the great freedom movement broke out. We do not have the details but it appears a fact that Maharaja Maheshwar Singh was looked upon with considerable suspicion by the British authorities. The Maharaja was first pressurised to extend all possible help to fight the 'rebels', but when he offered the services of his sepoys, it was at once rejected. Maybe, the Britishers noticed a pervading atmosphere of resentment in the whole of Mithila region against everything British.

Maharaja Maheshwar Singh's eldest son, Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh, who was the chief patron of Chanda Jha, was born on 25 September, 1858. Just when he had completed his second year, his father died on 20 October, 1860. This led to the transfer of the management of the Darbhanga Raj to the Court of Wards. This Court of Wards sought to work as an instrument of change in the Mithila society by first fashioning the life of the young Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh and that

of his younger brother, Kumar Rameshwar Singh on modern lines presumably to hold them up as models before the people who were steeped in conservatism. For this naturally the first requirement was their segregation from the conservative atmosphere of the Darbhanga palace. But this they could not do without opposition from those near and dear to the young Maharaja and the Kumar, including the mother. But the officers of the Court of Wards were bent upon removing them from what they considered the 'baneful effects' of the prevalent conservatism. In this connection the opinion of one of the officers may be considered:

"A very considerable portion of their time is devoted to the inopportunities of the Purohits, to ceremonies which seem purposely to break up the day and render connected studies almost impossible."

An idea as to the exact lines on which these officers wanted the Maharaja and the Kumar to grow can be had from the report of the General Manager, Col. J. Burn:

"In Mathematics the Maharaja is deficient and inferior to his younger brother, but both are well-read, can and do discuss books and the more prominent European subjects of the day with intelligence, have a good knowledge of English and English games, are pleasant and agreeable companions, quite alive to the absurdity of prejudices of the uneducated portion of their countrymen."

In the seventies of the nineteenth century, the Maharaja and the Kumar were found quite capable of taking over the charge of administration of the estate. It was with great satisfaction that the Court of Wards noted the progress made by them:

"Both the Maharaja and his brother had received a thorough English education, were proficient in manly exercises and free from vices which are too often the ruin of the native magnates."

It is likely that by the 'ruin of the native magnates' what was meant was the ruin of the neo-moderns in Bengal, who in their eagerness to adopt western ways, had begun to adopt even the bad ways of the Europeans to the utter neglect of all that was good in Indian culture. Not so the young Maharaja and his younger brother. They were in a way a blend of the old and

the new, taking due care to see to it that their studies of modern subjects made progress side by side with Sanskrit studies. It seems, they were made to understand that interest in oriental studies was almost a by-product of the English educational policy which aimed at broadening the base of education no doubt, but also retaining what was valuable in the old system. As a modern man the Maharaja maintained a diary, and in this we find mention of how, apart from applying himself to the study of western subjects and management of the estate, he could also find time to study such abstruse subjects as *Nyaya* and *Vedanta* with the help of traditional Pandits.

We have seen how the officers of the Court of Wards were keen to train the Maharaja on modern lines. But to train up the Maharaja and his younger brother by giving them modern education was one thing and to train up the whole people by extending to them the advantage of modern education was quite another. The fact that the Maharaja and his brother had received English education was important enough but it just showed a way. It did not go much beyond that. They stood as a class by themselves, quite separate from the average rung of people and hence were not to be emulated freely. Besides, the officers suffered from an old prejudice and did not take energetic steps to push ahead the new system of education. It was a sort of hangover from the time of the 'mutiny' when it was thought by a sizable section of the Europeans that the insistence on guardians by Inspector of Schools to send their children to schools had something to do with the outbreak of the 'mutiny'. It is possible that the English authorities refused the assistance offered by Maharaja Maheshwar Singh as they discerned some signs of a simmering discontent among the people caused by the insistence of the Inspector of Schools on guardians to send their children to schools. From now onward it was natural for the officers not to press guardians to send their boys to schools. The general apathy of the upper caste people, coupled with lukewarm attitude of the officers, had a very bad effect on the spread of new education. The position could not be otherwise considering the strong view the high officials took of the action taken by the Inspector of Schools. Dr. B.B. Misra

in his book *Indian Middle Classes* has quoted the minutes of the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal according to which the Inspector of Schools committed an act of indiscretion by 'ordering people to educate their children' and, therefore, was to be 'unsparingly checked.' He made it clear that his Government did not 'desire to assist in the education of a single child not brought to the school with the full voluntary unsolicited consent of its parents'. No wonder as a result of all this, the new education, which was almost in its infancy in the area, suffered a rude setback. This appears to be the reason why we do not hear of any new schools having been opened for quite a few years following 1857 movement, although in the fifties we know of as many as 45 schools having been opened by Darbhanga Raj alone at the cost of Rs. 10,000 a year.

Throughout the sixties the position remained unfavourable to the spread of English education in the Mithila region. As already noted, the settled policy was to make a beginning with the establishment of vernacular schools and then pass on to convert them into English schools. But absolutely erroneously, it was assumed by the officers that the region was without a linguistic and literary tradition of its own and that there was no alternative to accepting Hindustani, a remote western speech, for use in its schools. The fact that the Mithila region had a continued and rich literary tradition in Maithili, with a distinct script of its own, was completely ignored. The Englishmen perhaps did not care very much for languages except those that were important from administrative point of view. That way, Hindi-Urdu was enough for them. Perhaps it was not possible for them to make a clear distinction between Hindi and Urdu except in so far as they were written in two different scripts. Perhaps, if the people of the upper castes had taken some interest in the matter, they would have pointed out the mistake. But nothing like this happened and the confusion went on becoming worse confounded.

Besides, Hindi-Urdu having been selected as languages for the schools, it was also ordered that the books to be used as textbooks in the schools be indented for from Allahabad. We

also learn from a note from the then Collector of Tirhut addressed to the General Manager, Raj Darbhanga, that Dr. Fallon may be approached 'in procuring masters,' and that 'books in Hindi and Urdu may be indented for from Allahabad.' The Hindi and Urdu books at Allahabad were possibly at that time prepared by the same author or authors, the most well known among them being those prepared jointly by Munshi Suraj Mull and Pandit Radha Lal. It was never thought for a moment that if Hindi was at all to be taught in the schools, the minimum that was to be done was to get the books prepared locally in order that the language used in textbooks may partake of the characteristics of the local speech and thereby made less unacceptable. But nothing like this was done. A Hindi used in western U.P., which was hardly distinguishable from Urdu, was most thoughtlessly planted in an uncongenial soil with the inevitable result that it ever remained indifferently learnt and could not strike its roots in society. On the top of this, the attempt to import teachers from western U.P. having failed, teaching work was left to be done by half-baked literates making Hindi teaching a complete flop. Again and again we have inspecting officers pointing out that for most of the students Hindi would be more convenient than Urdu and that steps should be taken to improve Hindi teaching. In 1869 the Inspector of Schools, Tirhut Division, said:

"Most of the teachers, called Hindi teachers, know not properly even the Barnamala, the first Hindi Book. Most of the Urdu teachers are astonished to hear the words, history, geography, Euclid, algebra, mensuration, roots, idioms, primary and secondary meanings, parsing as they have never heard them in their life. Some of them have learnt up to the 2nd or 3rd class of our old vernacular schools before the time of the present Inspector of Schools when the efficiency of a school consisted only in the number of boys attending it."

No wonder even those who had by now overgrown their initial apathy to the new education were reluctant to send their children to schools. Of course, as noted by the Inspector of Schools, the ignorant section of the people had its own reasons for not sending their children to schools. This section thought

that the sponsors might have some 'secret motive' in establishing the schools. The Inspector of Schools lamented over the sad state of affairs in the schools and appealed to the good sense of the public-spirited people of Bihar to come forward to make Bihar catch up with other provinces, but the mischief wrought by the initial wrong step had become too deep-rooted to be easily undone.

In 1866, we learn of 26 schools having been opened in the Mithila region at a cost Rs. 38 for each school. But in 1871 we are told of the maintenance of only 21 schools with a strength of 702 children. Earlier in 1855 we learn of a middle school having been started by the officers at Laheriasarai, the district headquarters, only to be closed down after some time for want of students. This example impelled the Collector to believe that 'the natives were not ready to patronise English education.' As noted already, this was the year in which the Lieutenant Governor was informed of 515 litterateurs having worked to enrich Bengali literature.

It may be noted here that in the year 1871 which marked a decline in English education in the Mithila region, Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Ganganatha Jha was born at village Pahi in the present Madhubani district. We know from his autobiography, recently published, that as a child he was put under Sanskrit Pandits to learn the alphabet and subsequently rudiments of Sanskrit. As was generally the practice then, as a member of the elite, he was also put under a Maulavi to learn Persian. By now the area had a number of new schools. But it could not be thought of that young Ganganatha Jha should be sent to one of them. It appears certain that for the families that cared for education and culture these schools were no schools at all and, therefore, there did not arise a question of sending any child to them.

A few years later the position improved and a few Brahmins began sending their boys there. While in 1870 the Deputy Inspector of Schools had considered the presence of a *Soti* boy (a sub-group of the Maithil Brahmins to which Dr. Ganganatha Jha belonged) in a school a matter of such great importance that he mentioned it in his inspection report. Two years later

in 1872 regarding a school in Darbhanga the progress was called 'satisfactory considering the blind prejudice shown by people'.

In the seventies of the nineteenth century, the opinion among the high caste Hindus, particularly the Brahmins, was more or less divided on whether to send the boys to schools or not. This difference in opinion was almost proportionate to the degree of cultural awareness of the persons concerned. If a man considered the whole exercise as foreign to the genius of the land, he withheld his children from schools. If this awareness was not strong, he got his children enrolled. Of course as time progressed, there was greater tendency towards sending the children to schools rather than towards withholding them. In 1872, it was noticed that out of 702 students reading in Darbhanga Raj Schools as many as 499 were caste Hindus—certainly a sign of improvement—but at the same time there was no dearth of caste Hindus who considered it not at all necessary to send their boys to schools. A typical example may be given from the note in the diary of A. Keally, the Deputy Collector and Magistrate of Sitamarhi in 1873.

"The Brahmins of the village said they had their boys taught Sanskrit at home, but if they had a Pandit who would teach them Sanskrit and Hindee they would send the boys to the schools. Some Brahmins I met at the school said Hindee was of no use to them. One who repeated a 'shloka' in Sanskrit admitted he could not write a chitti or his signature in Hindee."

The fear of conversion to Christianity having been overcome, a new fear loomed on the horizon. This was the fear of losing Sanskrit for a Hindee which had no relevance to their life. In the year 1876, the Director of Public Instruction, Bihar, in his report said :

"The fact of Tirhut Brahmins attending the schools is an encouraging sign because tenets of their religion have hitherto led them to regard any attempt to educate the people in English with distrust and suspicion in the ignorant belief that the teaching of English is indirectly intended to discourage the teaching of Sanskrit."

This was how Hindi was viewed by the people of the Mithila region about this period. Now this, now that, there was no

end to the suspicions lurking in the mind of the people as to the real purpose of imposing Hindi, more or less a foreign tongue, on an unwilling people. It was certain that Hindi was being thrust down the people's throat without caring for their sentiment or their educational need. But the resentment of what may be called the middle classes as distinguished from the upper classes represented by Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh, did not have any effect on the authorities who proceeded ahead to teach Hindi in the schools to the utter exclusion of the real mother tongue, Maithili. They did this because they knew that sullen and resentful as a group of people was, it was too disorganised and hence too impotent to challenge it successfully. Any way, what is strange is that the authorities did not stop for a moment to consider the opinion expressed by G. Campbell, the Lieutenant-Governor in 1871 on the topic :

"I was astonished on lately visiting Bihar to find this bastard language not only flourishing in its fullest course in our official proceedings but that we are perpetuating it by teaching in our schools. . . . I found that in all our so-called vernacular schools this monstrous language, if it can be called a language, is being taught by Maulavis instead of the vernacular. . . . I am determined to put a stop to the teaching of this language in our schools."

In writing the above note Campbell had perhaps in his mind the prevalence of Urdu in the schools as a result of complete dearth of suitable teachers or books of Hindi. All the same what Campbell meant was clear enough, namely that (1) a language which had no base in the society should not be taught and (2) a vernacular having its root in the environment should be encouraged.

Unfortunately, this well-considered view of an experienced high official remained completely ignored. We do not know the full circumstances in which it happened. But it seems as the seat of the government lay far away in Bengal, it was easy for local officers to continue moving in misconceived direction. Had the cultural elite of the society taken interest in what was being taught in the schools and pointed out the mistake, the position might have been different. But they remained indifferent with

the result that Maithili could not find its rightful place in the curriculum.

During the few years that followed, the circumstances led to this clumsy attempt at teaching clumsy Hindi becoming a permanent feature of the educational system. With Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh becoming major in 1880, strangely he did everything possible to bring Hindi to the forefront. This could be done only by relegating Maithili to the background. Of course, he did not want Maithili to be impoverished as we have already seen how he ordered Chanda Jha to prepare a *Ramayana* in Maithili. But this was a poor compensation for the loss he caused by ordering replacement of the Maithili language and script by the Hindi language and script in his office. He got the above change introduced almost with an iron-hand. He ordered that Maithili be replaced by Hindi and when this presented difficulties, he ordered that those in charge of records must complete its mastery within three months or be dismissed from services. In his order, dated the 14th July, 1880, he said :

"I have given orders for introduction of Hindi character and language in my office a very long time ago. This, however, cannot take place till our vernacular *amlas* get thoroughly to understand the character to read and write it fluently. This, however, I am sorry to say that none of our *amlas* knows how to do.

I have, therefore, been obliged to pass those orders. That all *amlas* should at once set to work to master the Hindi character and language.

That I give them another three months to learn it. That is, in November they will have to master it thoroughly and to save me from the painful necessity of pensioning or dismissing old hands.

Sd/-Lakshmishwar Singh
14.7.80"

Within three weeks from this he also announced three prizes of the values of Rs. 200, Rs. 150 and Rs. 150 for works in Hindi language on science, poetry and novel respectively. Also a fourth prize of Rs. 100 was announced for an essay in Hindi.

It is clear from this that Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh was quite alive to the importance of a Modern Indian vernacular and he wanted it to be fully developed in order to become a capable instrument of social change. But what was erroneous about it was that he wanted Hindi as the language to be accepted for the purpose. This was partly due to the fact that ever since his childhood the Maharaja had lived and worked under the guidance of the Europeaus who knew nothing else than Hindi-Urdu and partly to the pan-Indian society in which he had moved. In the social circles in which the Maharaja moved Hindi came only next to English. The Maharaja does not appear to have known Maithili except as a language to be used in the household or among the courtiers. He realised little the disaster it would spell for the common man to whom Hindi was almost a 'foreign' language with its attendant disadvantages.

In the eighties of the nineteenth century, however, a few other developments took place which had quite a beneficial effect on Maithili. About this period G.A. Grierson, as subdivisional officer, Madhubani bagan taking keen interest in Maithili. He worked not only on such old masters as Vidyapati and Umapati but also on folk literature of various types. He came into contact with Pandits like Halli Jha and Harshanath Jha, and with their assistance began preparing Maithili grammer and editing literary texts. Hetried to collect the writings of the living poets as well. In course of about five years *i.e.*, from 1880 to 1884 he published the *Maithili Chrestomathy*, *Twenty-One Vaishnava Hymns* and Umapati's *Parijata-harana.*

These efforts of Grierson had quite a salutary effect on the mind of that section of the people which was receptive. There are reasons to believe that Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh's interest in Maithili and ordering for the preparation of a *Ramayana* was due to the examples of Grierson. Among the persons who seem to have imbibed the literary influence of Grierson directly and proceeded to produce works in Maithili were Chanda Jha, Bhanunath Jha, Jivan Jha, Raghunandan Dasa, Parameshwar Jha etc. Older than any of these was Halli Jha who, while assisting Grierson in his literary works, proceeded to write a grammer in Maithili himself, which unfortunately is lost to us.

On account of the inspiring example of Grierson Maithili did not remain for these persons, as for several others, only a language to be spoken at home or left to be cultivated by those who had no access to classical languages, particularly Sanskrit. They seem to have had the thrill of a discovery. They thought that when a foreigner from 'across the seven seas' could find beauty in it, it must have intrinsic worth. The example of Grierson opened a horizon which was as new as it was fascinating. It turned their mind also to the past which was to be brought out and studied in new light.

It was a quickening of the mind taking place about this period that was largely responsible for Chanda Jha proceeding to prepare the *Ramayana* and completing it in 1898. Several results were to follow from the new awakening that had dawned upon the people. The Mithila Printing works was started at Madhubani with the sole purpose of publishing Maithili books. Soon the publication of journals like the *Maithila-Hita-Sadhana*, the *Mithila-Moda*, and the *Mithila-Mihira* was seriously taken up.

But all this was in the nature of tinkering with the problem and the leeway could not be made up easily. A few persons, however enthusiastic, could not do much in the face of heavy odds in the shape of the recognised elite section siding with the officials with the result that Maithili could not occupy its rightful place in the curriculum. Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh who could have raised the status of his mother tongue by promoting its all-round cultivation and by enabling it to find a place in the school curriculum threw away a golden chance. He even drove away Maithili from his office. This did not only render the knowledge of Maithili language and script unnecessary for those seeking employment in Raj office but what was more important, it made lakhs of Raj tenants regard Maithili as of no consequence.

Taking into consideration the general illiteracy among the people it can be safely said that there could not have been any resistance to the move from the side of the people. Besides, the famines of the seventies and the eighties had practically broken the backbone of the people. Economically and morally they were at such a low ebb that they could not possibly think of anything

beyond maintaining their precarious existence. What is regrettable is that the zamindars of the time were not a little responsible for this helpless condition of the people. Although the zamindars of the time were not successful in getting the permanent settlement reopened as they wanted to, all the same they appear to have derived utmost benefit from it leaving the tenants high and dry. In this connection Dr. B.B. Misra says :

"It lent support and added strength to the claims of the zamindars in a province where, in the absence of education among the lower orders of society, they could indulge in rapacity without fear of punishment or public opinion."

One of the papers brought before the Indian Famine Commission of 1881, among other things, said :

"The administration of Bihar stands in a discreditable position of countenancing, and so abetting, notorious abuses for fear of commotion which would ensue if the people know their rights and were encouraged to assert them.

"Darbhanga formed part of the worst famine tract in Bihar. The income of the estate rose from the arbitrary raising of the rent which had increased considerably from the time of permanent settlement."

A paper laid before the Commission deplored the fact that the "Raja of Darbhanga" who was allowed to enjoy all the proceeds of the estate except a tiny fraction (less than 1/200th) should have kept his people in the condition of such a miserable poverty that 'a single crop failure plunges them into destitution.' How astonishing that instead of attending to economic and moral problems concerning the people, the elite section reserved its enthusiasm for work in which it was not, truly speaking, qualified.

The extreme attachment of the elite to Sanskrit made the position worse. Although in the late seventies more and more people had begun sending their boys to schools, the interest of an important section of the people in Sanskrit had not flagged in the least.

Whereas as early as 1823 Raja Ram Mohan Roy had protested against the establishment of a Sanskrit college in Calcutta, efforts were made to establish Sanskrit colleges at

Darbhanga and at Rahika in Madhubani district in 1827 and 1881 respectively. It is clear from this that the light of new education which had become so dominant in Bengal in 1823 did not enter Mithila even in the next 60 years or so. Up to the closing years of the nineteenth century, attachment to Sanskrit was so great that nobody in Mithila could imagine that the study of the Sastras had, in the changed context, become of lesser importance than before. This was a legacy in Mithila right from the medieval period when, as a province affected in the least by the Muslim inroads, Mithila had become almost a custodian of Sanskrit learning. In 1890 a note from Pandit Mahesh Chandra Vidyaratna said:

"The standard of instruction in Darbhanga District is as high in *Nyaya* as that of Bengal, while it equals the Benaras standard in respect of Grammar on Panini's system, *Vedanta,*, *Sankhya Mimansa* and *Jyotisha,* subjects which are not much studied in Bengal. About this period, Darbhanga Raj spent about twenty thousand rupees on Sanskrit education."

Indeed after 1860 when Darbhanga Raj was put under the Court of Wards following the death of Maharaja Maheshwar Singh, the elite section of the population in the Mithila region, with Darbhanga as its centre, was working at a cross-purpose. While they were gradually betaking themselves to the new education, their love for Sanskrit had remained as strong as before. No doubt this tendency was noticeable even in Bengal, but there was a difference. In Bengal, the people had, by and large, taken to English education unreservedly and it was only a handful of persons, mostly Brahmins, who retained their interest in Sanskrit, partly due to their devotion to Sanskrit learning and partly to their profession as Purohits. We know that *Karma-Kanda* formed a part of the life of the common people and since *Karma-Kanda* was wholly in Sanskrit, one could not do without it if one had anything to do with *Karma-Kanda.* The difference in the approach of Bengal and Mithila lay in this that while in Bengal *Karma-Kanda* was a side need, in Mithila it was important, indeed dominating. This necessarily led to Mithila society remaining extremely conservative. It continued to look upon English education as something foreign to the spirit of the

land and hence something to be resisted as far as possible. An important section of the Mithila society had almost the feeling that if Mithila was to succumb to the lure of English education, the very soul of Mithila would be killed and it would not be able to maintain its place in the field of religion and Sanskrit learning. In this connection the aims and objects of the establishment of a Sanskrit college (in 1901), as set forth by the sponsors, were: "to keep green the memory of the days that are no more, of the certainties that are dead and buried in oblivion, to revive Sanskrit learning that lives up to this day like the fossil records of the wisdom of the ancients."

By now the time had progressed much and consequently the aims and objects were bound to become somewhat defensive in tone. All the same the solicitude for Sanskrit was unmistakably betrayed. But very soon the agitation following the partition of Bengal began. This had necessarily a wide appeal and it was impossible for Mithila region to remain unaffected. Khudiram Bose making an attempt on the life of the Commissioner of Tirhut at Muzaffarpur together with his arrest at Pusa in the Darbhanga district must have given a jolt to the mind of the people and they must have asked what all this was about. More developments followed. In 1909, when 41 students of the Raj school sought permission to attend students' conference to be held at Gaya with Hasan Imam as President, the General Manager of Raj Darbhanga refused permission saying that "the trouble in Bengal began in this way" and he had "no wish to see the province of Bihar follow its example."

All this points to the changes that were taking place and influencing the mind of the people. Also the presence of the Europeans in their midst, particularly Grierson, gave a new direction to their thinking in the scholastic field. What came broadly to be known as 'making researches' came into being. Evidently, in the beginning the researchers could not be many. In reply to the questionnaire issued in the first flush of the establishment of Bihar Government with headquarters at Patna, Maharaja Rameshwar Singh Bahadur of Darbhanga said :

"Sanskrit learning in Mithila needs generous treatment. Mithila is the only place in the province where Sanskrit has been taught on a large scale for centuries."

"Among the Biharis I know of none who is engaged in original research work except Pandit Ganganatha Jha and Parameshwar Jha. The latter is making researches for writing a history of Tirhut. Both deserve encouragement."

It is said that in writing his treatise of historical importance, namely *Mithila-Tattva-Vimarsa*, Parameshwar Jha fully utilised the material collected earlier by Chanda Jha, and since Maharaja Rameshwar Singh was concerned only with those researchers who were actually working in the field at that time, there was no necessity for him to mention the name of Chanda Jha who was already dead about seven years ago.

It is clear from all this that as late as the beginning of the twentieth century while attachment to Sanskrit had not ceased in the Mithila region, English education was being accepted by more and more people with quite a few of them taking up research work as well. On the basis of evidence available, it can be safely asserted that Chanda Jha was one of the earliest workers of the region attempting his hands at researches. This is very strange considering the atmosphere in which he was born and brought up. In his early years it was not possible for him to read English or know anything about researches, for about that time no opportunity for these existed. But as he grew older he saw ever new opportunities coming up before the people. He saw the new schools being opened but remaining unattended, at least by the boys of the upper caste to which he himself belonged. But gradually he also saw more and more boys, including those of the upper castes, going to schools and availing themselves of such opportunities as were available. Chanda Jha must have personally known the atmosphere in which in 1869 the Manager of the Darbhanga Raj reported to the then Collector that "Brahmins were openely opposed to education but there were plenty of other tenants eager to have their children taught in schools." Chanda Jha must have also noticed how the attitude of the people was changing surely and clearly as reflected in similar reports in 1871 and 1872, for the report

in 1871 noted "one striking feature which deserves notice is that Tirhutias, both Kayastha and Brahmins, who are as a rule averse to English education have begun appreciating the same" and the report in 1872 noted that while in the previous year, the number of students was 506, in the present year this number came to 702, *i.e.*, an increase of ninety students, adding that "this increase considering the blind prejudice of the people of Tirhut, properly speaking, cannot but be agreed as satisfactory."

Chanda Jha lived through all these experiences. But he had some other experiences as well. Sensitive as he was, he could well see the new spirit that was noticeable on the horizon due to efforts made by western and Indian scholars. As a matter of fact, Grierson was personally there to be seen and emulated. We do not have any direct evidence that Grierson had ever personally come into contact with Chanda Jha. But we know that he had intimate contacts with Halli Jha, Harshanath Jha and a host of other scholars. It is thus natural that Grierson should have known Chanda Jha and obtained his assistance while working on the problems of Maithili. That Nagendranath Gupta, while working on Vidyapati, sought Chanda Jha's help and got it in plenty is an established fact.

Evidently, all these contacts with scholars working on modern lines could not but have their impact on Chanda Jha. Extremely conservative as he was in his personal life, he was discerning enough to note that the only way in which he could give his best to society was through his writings in the mother tongue. No doubt there was the clear danger of his being scoffed at by the Pandits who considered writing in vernacular as something beneath their dignity. But so convinced was Chanda Jha of the correctness of his stand in the matter that he proceeded ahead not only to write *muktakas, bhajans, mahakavya etc.,* but also to give us examples of prose. Chanda Jha was so much thrilled by the new spirit that he tried, in addition, to 'discover' the past of Mithila and place it before his compatriots in order to enthuse them to undertake more detailed and arduous work on the line.

We do not exactly know whether by the turn of the century Chanda Jha had become a convert to the view that Mithila

should go the whole hog to have English education. Possibly he was not disposed like that. Chanda Jha's conversion was limited to such attempts as could be made principally to enrich the mother tongue on modern lines. Of course, an attempt like this included many things—perfecting the weak links in literature, studying the language historically and grammatically, knowing the past etc. All this was not possible to be done by an old man, absolutely broken in health and spirit. But it is significant how he showed the way and always acclaimed with hilariousness any attempt at good work calculated to serve the interest of the mother tongue. When in 1906 Muralidhar Jha, with the active assistance of a doyen like Jivan Jha, began publishing the *Mithila-Moda* from Kashi, Chanda Jha, who was to die only the next year, was beside himself with joy and wrote back to Muralidhar Jha a couplet:

Kashi has turned doubly adorable
    as providing a lap to *Mithila-Moda* ;
It's most fortunate that the journal
    should have patrons like Murlidhara and Jivana[1].

Before this, *Maithila-Hita-Sadhana* had already been published and Chanda Jha was overjoyed on the publication of the *Mithila-Moda* for the simple reason that even as a single sparrow could not make a summer, *Maithila-Hita-Sadhana* by itself was not enough.

It has to be noted here that the two periodicals that came into existence during the lifetime of the poet were published from outside Mithila. It was very much regrettable on the part of those who lived in Mithila proper, including the poet and his patron. No doubt in about two years' time *Mithila Mihira* was brought out from Darbhanga, absolutely at the cost of Darbhanga Raj, but Chanda Jha could not see it. In the circumstances, the

1. *Mithilā-modā goda laya baisali*
   Kāśī bhelī namasyā.
   Muralīdhara Jīvana śubhacintaka
   Patraka parama tapasyā.

pleasure expressed by him at the publication of the *Mithila-Moda* was not a simple pleasure at the appearance of a periodical. Convinced as he was of the utter importance of a journal or periodical as a means of improving the mother tongue, particularly its prose, he must have been reminded of the failure of his patron and others in Mithila in a field in which, in spite of his meagre resources, Muralidhar Jha had succeeded.

By this time Chanda Jha had become very old and practically infirm. In the circumstances, he by himself could not do much. Besides, he had no access to the store of western knowledge contained in European languages. He could at best be said to have had a touch of the western literary ideals. Necessarily his interest in the western method was academic and nothing more than that. Even up to the opening years of the twentieth century when he died, the section of the people to which Chanda Jha belonged had its interest in Sanskrit quite intact. But whether the traditionalists liked it or not, more and more people were gradually drawn towards English education. All the same the tempo of English education was not satisfactory for quite some years, for in 1912 when Chanda Jha was already dead about four years ago, we notice Joganand Kumar, the editor of the *Mithila-Mihira*, laying stress on English education in a manner reminding of the advocacy of Raja Ram Mohan Roy or Madhab Chandra Mullick of Bengal in favour of English education more than one hundred years ago. Joganand Kumar said:

"The students who come out of Sanskrit schools do not find the knowledge lucrative in any pursuit. Their learning does not help them in securing any executive or ministerial office. Education on modern lines can only be adaptable to modern needs."

This difference of about one hundred years in advocating the need of English education made all the difference between Bengal and Mithila. By accepting English education more than one hundred years before Mithila did so, Bengal got a lead which bore fruit in many fields. While others were struggling whether to accept English education or not, Bengal seized it by its fore lock and got at the top in all modern departments, including literature. We may not mind our loss in other fields, but the loss in the literary field continues to plague us like a festering

sore with which we have to live for the present. Today Bihar is being branded as a Hindi state, little caring that the Maithili speakers who constitute a substantial portion of the population have not reconciled themselves to accepting Hindi as their mother tongue. Years ago the late Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha said that in Bihar Hindi was but a 'a foreign idiom' which the people had willingly accepted as their common medium of expression. Others might have accepted Hindi willingly, but there can be little doubt that the thinking section of the Maithili speakers is very much resentful about it. This section wants Hindi no doubt but it wants it only in the form of the national language of the country. At the same time this section wants utmost freedom and opportunity to enrich Maithili which savants like Chanda Jha took so much pains to develop on modern lines.

4. FAMILY BACKGROUND

Chanda Jha was born on 21 January, 1831 at Pindaruch in the present district of Darbhanga. His father's name was Bhola-nath Jha, but he was ordinarily called Bhola Jha. The family to which Bhola Jha belonged was known as 'Rajaurā-Māṇḍara' which was nothing but a distinctive mark assigned to it in the fourteenth century when Harisinhadeva, the last ruler of the Karnata dynasty in Mithila, got the genealogies of all families prepared with a view to ruling out possibilities of marriages within prohibited degrees of relationship. This was a Kulin family from which came some of the well known scholars of Mithila. To name a few, Narasihma, Batesvara, and Yajnapati belonged to this family. This family was directly related by blood to another distinguished family of Mithila, named 'Sodarpura' to which belonged Visvanatha, Bhavanatha, Samkara, Madhava, Kesava and a host of other scholars. Jayadeva, better known as Pakṣadhara, also come of Sodarapura (Bhauala) family. It may be of interest to note that although Yajnapati is said to have been Pakṣadhara's teacher in the beginning of the latter's career as student, they came later on to differ so strongly in Sastric interpretation that it was impossible for them ever to see eye to

eye in subsequent years. Not only that, the difference between them was so marked and generated so much heat that in due time it crystallized into two schools of thought with the result that disciples and disciples' disciples on the one side freely criticised the theory propounded by disciples and discipled disciples on the other side. It was in this context of controversy between the Mandaras and the Sodarpuras that the famous scholar Gokulanatha of the eighteenth century, while considering aspects of *Navya-nyaya,* said in clear terms that he would steer clear of what had degenerated into almost a family feud between the 'Mandaras' and the 'Sodarapuras' and would, therefore, give his views independently.

Although Chanda Jha was cut off from the scholarly background of the family by one of his forefathers having shifted to Pindaruch, a village lacking in that sort of distinction, he must have inherited a streak of that culture which naturally characterised the family and which at least his father, Bhola Jha, must have at times doled into his ears.

Chanda Jha's father, Bhola Jha, it appears, was poor with no property worth the name. His grandfather, Ranjan Jha *must* have, as was the practice then at Pindaruch, received some landed property from Nityanand Choudhary, the zemindar of Pindaruch or his son. But it must have been small and inconsequential.

In due course Bhola Jha married the daughter of Himakar Jha at Baragao in the present district of Saharsa. The distance between Pindaruch and Baragao may be about one hundred miles. This distance was not small considering the lack of communications in those days. Himakar Jha was prosperous no doubt but belonged to the family of 'Chhajana Sarisaba' which was inferior in social status to 'Rajaura-mandara' of Bhola Jha. Thus what one party lacked, the other party excelled in. It must have been in a spirit of adjustment that the two parties must have met and settled the marriage.

Just after his *Upanayana samskara* (sacred thread ceremony), young Chanda Jha is said to have been sent to Baragao to study there. Baragao had a scholastic background, being often associated with the name of Vriddha Vachaspati of the ninth century

and had a *tola or pathasala* of some distinction. It was, therefore, thought that at Baragao Chanda Jha would live more comfortably with his maternal grandfather and would have greater peace of mind to apply himself to his studies. As expected, he remained at Baragao for a number of years. He might have come to Pindaruch on special occasions such as marriage, or *uponayana* and gone back to Baragao after a few days. He does not appear to have come finally to Pindaruch before he was eighteen or nineteen and had completed in the main his studies of *Vyakarana* and *Sahitya.*

According to the prevailing convention in the scholarly circle then, he should have proceeded to Benares or Navadvipa to embellish his scholarship by adding to his knowledge of *Vyakarana* and *Sahitya* a special knowledge of *Nyaya.* But he did not do that. The reason for this might have been the financial strait in which his family found itself then. In the circumstances, he had to search out a suitable job for himself. The first job that fell to his lot was the one under Babu Vasudeva Singh, step-brother of Maharaja Rudra Singh, father of Maharaja Maheshwar Singh. Babu Vasudeva Singh was the maternal grandfather of Dr. Ganganatha Jha, who as a child and as a boy systematically lived with his maternal grandmother at Ganhawari Deorhi. Dr. Ganganatha Jha has noted in his autobiography how he saw Chanda Jha attached to the Ganhawari Deorhi of his maternal grand-father. Chanda Jha was one of the Pandits at whose feet Ganganatha Jha as a child had his initiation into the alphabet (Varnamala).

Chanda Jha does not appear to have lived at Ganhawari for more than five or six years. About the middle of the fifties of the nineteenth century, he joined service at Narahani under Babu Bishweshwar Narayan Singh. It is not certain how long he continued at Narahani, but, it appears, sometime before Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh became major in 1880, he came down from Narahani to join the court of Maharaja Lashmishwar Singh at Darbhanga.

Chanda Jha remained attached to the court of Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh till the latter's death in 1898 and after that to the court of his younger brother, Maharajadhiraja Rameshwar

Singh. It was during the time of Maharajadhiraja Rameshwar Singh that on December 14, 1907 he died. He had a paralytic stroke at Darbhanga and on knowing that his end was near he was taken to Benares by train. At the time of his being taken away to Benares, Maharajadhiraja Rameshwar Singh saw him off at the Darbhanga Railway station—an honour which no commoner had received thus far.

It is doubtless that it was under the direct patronage of Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh and his younger brother, Maharajadhiraja Rameshwar Singh that Chanda Jha wrote his major works, the important among them being the *Mithila Bhasha Ramayana*, the *Gita-Sudha*, the *Ahalyacharita-Nataka*, the *Padyavali*, *Lakshmishwar-Vilas* and the *Purusha Pariksha*. Reference has also been made by scholarst o such works of his as the *GitaSapta Sati*, the *Mula-grama-vichara*, the *Chhanda-Vichara*, *Vatahvana*, *Rasakaumudi*, but they are not available today.

It is not definitely known in what order Chanda Jha wrote all these works, although we know in what years at least two of his works were completed. We know the traslation of *Purusa-Pariksha* into Maithili was completed in 1889 and the *Mithila Bhasha Ramayana* in 1898. The translation of the *Purusha-Pariksha* seems to have been done under the influence of Grierson, for in the eighties, besides doing other literary works in connection with Maithili, Grierson also began translatings ome works into English. This could not have been possible except with the help of the Pandits. There are reasons to believe that the exercise so much influenced Chanda Jha that he himself began rendering *Purusa-Pariksha* into Maithili not only to bring the subject-matter within the reach of the common people but also to augment the stock of Maithili prose. It is certain that it was during the time of Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh that he could give his best, for in this per'od he was more comfortable from the points of view of congeniality of environment as well as personal frame of mind. Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh was an enlightened man, having received western education under the best of European tutors. As a boy he was snatched away (not without protest from the mother) from what was considered by the general manager of the Raja the 'inopportunities of Purohits' and put at Muzaffar-

pur, about 40 miles away from his home town Darbhanga, where a house was specially built to provide suitable acco mmodation. He had not lived there for many years when in 1865 he, along with his younger brother, Knmar Rameshwar Singh, was removed to Benares to prosecute further studies there. On his return from Benares he was made in charge of a circle under the Raj with the status of a sub-manager. Subsequently he was assigned one job after another in order to get himself trained not only as an efficient manager of his estate but also as an enlightened individual. Fortunately the Maharaja responded well to the efforts thus made by the European officers and tutors and grew up to be a man of wide sympathies and accomplishments. In reply to the felicitations extended to him as early as 1879 by the Bihar Landholders' Association he said in no uncertain terms that he was all for improvement of relationship between the zamindars and the tenants. Next year he was elected as a member of the British Indian Association which had its headquarters in Calcutta. In 1883, he was nominated as a member of the Governor-General's Legislative Council in whose affairs he at once began taking keen interest. Thus a new dimension was added to his functioning. Rightly has Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha said:

'The late lamented Maharaja Sir Lakshmishwar Singh of Darbhanga was the one Bihari who then commanded the ears of the public and the Government alike, but he was too closely identified with Calcutta and too much concerned with imperial matter to give any time to purely Bihar affairs.'[1]

The new assignments required him to stay mostly in Calcutta where he utilised every opportunity to cultivate friendship of all Europeans and Indians who mattered in those days. In the Legislative Council he acquitted himself well as an enlightened Indian, beginning to realise the inadequacy of the Indian public life under foreign masters and gave sufficient hints as to where his sympathy lay. Evidently, this could not be liked by the Government and he was not nominated to the Council when his term expired in 1885. All the same he got into the Council by election.

[1]Quoted by Dr. Jatashankar Jha in his *Biography of Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh*, Introduction, pp. v-vi.

This was a lesson both for him and the Government. While the Maharaja realised that the foreign masters could never appreciate independent thinking, the government decided not to rub the Maharaja the wrong way. But in spite of an outward truce between the parties, the Maharaja began gradually to drift towards organisations that had for its aim the loosening of the shackles of the people, political and otherwise. Naturally the Indian National Congress attracted him first and he began contributing liberally to its funds. The government kept a watch and consequently knew of this, but was unable to do anything to check it. In the nineties of the nineteenth century the Indian National Congress decided to shift a part of its activities to England in order to educate public opinion there regarding the real state of affairs in India. We have numerous records to prove that for all that was done in England, the organisers had mainly to depend upon the munificence of the Maharaja. In 1892 when the Indian National Congress could not find a suitable place for holding its annual session, the Maharaja made the premises of the Lowther House available after an outright purchase. By his actions and general approach to problems the Maharaja soon came to occupy a place of special importance in the public life of the country, and considering that his help would be forthcoming, Gandhiji began acquainting him from time to time with the condition of Indian settlers in Natal. But the Maharaja did not concern himself only with political issues confronting the Indians within the country and outside. He was vitally concerned with other issues as well. He tried his level best to eradicate social evil like polygamy which was prevalent here and there in the Mithila society, particularly among the Brahmins. He also extended full cooperation and help to push ahead English education, including girls' education. He appears to have been spending annually at least fifty thousand rupees on school education. The Maharaja was not slow to extend patronage to Sanskrit scholars or Sanskrit learning either. From all this it is clear beyond doubt that the Maharaja was an enlightened patron with wide interests and sympathies and extended unstinted support to any cause considered by him worthwhile from the point of view, political, educational or cultural.

In this process the Maharaja seems to have fallen a victim to an erroneous idea which, as some people think, vitiated the whole approach and confused the rank of writers, including Chanda Jha. As matters stood then, knowledge of Persian was considered valuable at least in the elite section of society. This was certainly a hang over from the Muslim regime in the country. Somehow Persian continued to be used in the law courts and even in some Hindu aristocratic families much after the English rule had become a settled fact. We do not know if the Maharaja had any knowledge of Persian. But Dr. Ganganatha Jha who was junior to him by about thirteen years, has noted in his Autobiography that he was put under a Maulavi to learn the Persian alphabet as well. It is possible that Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh had no occasion to learn Persian or Arabic because the obvious aim of his European tutors was to train him on English pattern without any regard being had to what the practice in the aristocratic family was.

Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh might not have had the knowledge of Persian or Arabic but surely he had known Urdu as well as its twin form, Hindi, which was current in the bazaars in the northern India and in some of the aristocratic families of a certain type. This was in a way another hang over from the previous regime. The fall of the sultanate in Delhi sent a wave of migration of Delhi people to the remote corners of India, particularly in northern India. Naturally they took with them their Delhi speech, called Khari-boli or elegant speech as distinguished from Pari-boli or vulgar speech spoken by the people of the lower rung of society in the western region. A good section of the migrants consisted of businessmen, who spread themselves to wherever they thought they would have better convenience in carrying on their trade. Darbhanga was one such place where a section of the migrants had come and settled permanently and made the people familiar, in however small degree, with the speech they had brought with them from their original home in Western India.

Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh had known this language in his home town Darbhanga as also at Muzaffarpur and Benares. Besides, he had always moved in pan-Indian societies in which,

short of English, this Hindi-Urdu was very much in use. In the formative period of his life his closest contacts were with European officers or teachers who knew only this Indian language. It was not, therefore, unnatural for him to be a supporter of a language which was current more or less in the whole of northern India. Perhaps in the opinion of the Maharaja the acceptance of Hindi was a sure method of enabling the people to move out of the narrow groove in which they had thus far functioned and join what, in his considered opinion, was developing as the main stream in the country. But it is certain that the Maharaja did not favour Hindi to be adopted for cultural purposes. If it had been so, he would not have extended patronage for cultivation of Maithili and asked persons like Chanda Jha to fill in the gaps in the Maithili literature.

All the same the fact remains that just on becoming major in 1880 he ordered that Raj records should all be done into Hindi. Apart from a few records that were still in Persian it necessarily meant replacement of Maithili language and script by Hindi language and script in most of the records, and since he also introduced recruitment to Raj services by open competition a sure incentive to having perfect knowledge of Maithili script was done away with.

As noted earlier, this order was passed by the Maharaja on 14 July, 1880. Subsequently he seems to have realised that in the interest of the ryots Maithili also was required to be retained. Early next month he ordered that 'Sunnuds' might be written either in Maithili or Hindi. This might have been also a device to put to some use those *amalas* whom he found unable to learn Hindi. But his enthusiasm for Hindi remained as strong as ever before as is clear from his announcement of four prizes about a month later for the best original works in Hindi. Although it is a fact that Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh had a genuine interest in seeing Hindi prosper in the Mithila region, he came perhaps to be not less concerned about Sanskrit or Maithili. That he was a great lover of Sanskrit in all its branches is clear from the fact that he held discussions with Pandits and listened to discourses by experts on abstruse subjects. He was also anxious to see works in Sanskrit and Maithili collected and printed at his

expense. As a matter of fact his court was a meeting place for Pandits not only from within Mithila but also from outside. Every Monday there used to be a gathering in which Pandits would enter into 'Sastrartha' or discussions and receive rewards commensurate with their worth in the field of their specialisation. In this connection the introduction to Chanda Jha's *Purusha-Pariksha* is interesting enough:

[1]'The Pandits of this country used to write prose and verse in Sanskrit only. They held the local dialect in scant regard and as such no important work was written in their vernacular. The kings also were proficient in Sanskrit only; many of them avoided even talking in the vernacular. But at present there is Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh, who is well-versed in many languages, including the Prakrit. Among the rules in his estate there is one of holding weekly meeting of distinguished scholars every Monday for scholastic discussions on different branches of learning which he personally attends. In *Nyaya* he listens to discussions on *Kusumanjali, Dravyaguna Kiranavali, Padavakya-ratnakara* etc. In *Vyakarana, Padarthasara, Bhasya, Vibhaktiya-rthanirnaya* are his favourite books. Discussions are also held on *Vedanta* and *Upanishadas*, and at times he listens to the recitations of the *Virudavalis* of Raghudeva Sarasvati and Chandra-datta Jha from Sanskrit Pandits. The Maharaja intends to have a collection made of all ancient works of Maithila Pandits of *Nyaya, Vyakarana, Mimansa* etc. He also wants the teaching of these subjects to be made according to traditional methods. A collection has already been made of an old work, Dipika, in Jyotisha with the commentary of Raghudeva Sarasvati which has been approvingly quoted by Vachaspati Misra. Bhavanatha *alias* Ayachi Dube Misra, Sankar Misra, Sridatta Upadhyaya etc. in Dharmasastra and which has been adopted by the Bengalis and the Deccanese in their Dharmasastra digests. The author of this Dipika is the great Maithil Pandit Mm. Srinivasa Misra. A collection of the poetics and dramas of Govind Misra (Thakur?), Bhavanatha Misra, Sankar Misra, Kavisiromani Ramadasa Jha, Govindadas Jha, Umapati Upadhyaya, Ramapati

[1]Adopted from Dr. J.S. Jha's *Biography of Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh*, pp. 123-24.

Upadhyaya and others has been made. *Anandamrita* (*Amritodaya*?) of Mm. Gokulanatha Upadhyaya has been brought to light. There is a scheme to publish the unpublished Sanskrit and Prakrit works of Bhana Jha, Harshanatha Jha, Chandra Kavi and others and to make them available to authorities on the subjects. Like *Purusha-pariksha* which has been translated into the vernacular language and published by the order of the Maharaja, they will be presented to the learned as well as those who take delight in ethical narratives. The *Ramayana* in Maithili by Kavi Chandra is ready for the press. These Maithili works on poetics and drama in Sanskrit and Prakrit will be published in the series called by Raj Pandits as 'Lakshmishwar Vilas Series'. Kavi Chandra has been entrusted with collection of these works. A correct version of *Vidyapati Padavali* which contains a lot of errors owing to its publication by non-Maithils will also be brought out incorporating additional good poems which have been collected since."

This extract from the introdution to *Purusha-pariksha* is important as it throws enough light on many subjects. It speaks of how the Maharaja had almost a plan to collect old and new works of Sanskrit and Maithili and publish them at his cost, and how he had made Chanda Jha responsible for their collection. This cannot be explained except in terms of a Ranaissance which had come into existence as a result of western contacts and had affected the Maharaja in a big way. Not only that, it is also clear that Chanda Jha himself had had a fair share of this quickening of the sensibilities. It is in this context that his undertaking of composition of the *Ramayana* and the collection of Maithili works, old and new, can be understood. An idea as to how accomplished the Maharaja had become due to training at the hands of Europeans can be formed by looking at the observation made by the editor of the *Bihar Times*:

'His western education was all that ought to have delighted the heart of the most exacting head of any aristocratic house in England to see his ward go through; his readings were varied, extending over the principal departments of western learning; and he had drawn a valuable fund of information from them which sparkled in his writings and speeches. But while absorbing

all that is best and noble in western learning, he did not forget that he was a Hindoo, and his western training was but superimposed upon a national base.'

In a way the Maharaja was a complete blend of the old and the new. While his attachment to the new age was doubtless, he had also adequate regard for the old culture of Mithila and of India. On the one hand, once a week he converted his court virtually into a gathering of Pandits which he regularly attended and on the other, he encouraged modern researches into problems of cultural importance. This obviously showed the two sides of the same coin. The dawning of the Renaissance had taught him to look backward as well as forward. Besides, by then Maithili had already become a subject of study by European scholars. Colebrook's study in 1801, Beame's in 1878, and Hoernle's in 1880, among others, must have come to his notice and stirred him to action. Perhaps more than these, it must have been the works of Grierson, published between 1880 and 1884, that had influenced him and he ordered a survey to be made of Maithili literature in order to see which of the links in the literary chain required to be repaired or perfected.

The Maharaja's court was a virtual cluster of Pandits. Apart from those who came from outside the province in the full hope of receiving generous patronage, practically every Pandit worth the name in the Mithila region made it a point to visit the court at regular intervals. And a good number of Pandits were attached to the court regularly. To name a few, the great Haladhar *alias* Halli Jha, Bani Jha, Chitradhar Misra, Chanda Jha, Gopal Choudhari and others regularly visited the court. So also Chumbana Jha of village Pilakhawar. Chumbana Jha had the reputation of a pandit of vast erudition and, therefore, occupied a position of special importance in Maithila society. In the first edition of Chanda Jha's *Ramayana* Chumbana Jha has been mentioned as having vetted it. This is perhaps the only reference made to Chumbana Jha having done anything in the field of Maithili. It appears this might have been just a device to forestall unfavourable criticism, if any, by pandits. Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh asked Chanda Jha to compose a *Ramayana* when he did not find a Rama-story narrated in Maithili. When

completed, it could surely be in the form of a *Mahakavya*. It is said that he also asked one Gopal Choudhary of Koilakh to compose the same. We do not know what happened to Gopal Choudhary's *Ramayana*.

It is clear that when Chanda Jha undertook to compose the *Ramayana* he was conscious not only of the orders he had received from the Maharaja, but also of his mission as one fired by new imagination and responsibility. In the new capacity he was to write as much in fulfilment of an inner urge for expression as to make up the deficiencies in the literary chain. As a matter of fact, Chanda Jha was affected by the new ideas so strongly that, apart from his poetic efforts, he also began collecting suitable materials for a comprehensive culture history of Mithila. Possibly he was by then too old and infirm to tour extensively. But he did a lot of spade work, sitting in his study. It is said that ultimately he surrendered all his material to Parameshwar Jha who utilised them to prepare his *Mithila-tattva-vimarsa.*

Chanda Jha was a prolific writer. He has to his credit a number of works both in verses and prose, mostly the former. Among his works, the following seven works are well known:

1. *Mithila-Bhasha-Ramayana*
2. *Mahesa-Vani-Samgraha*
3. *Chandra-Padyavali*
4. *Gita-Sudha*
5. *Ahalya-Charita-Nataka*
6. *Lakshmishvara-Vilasa*
7. *Purusha-pariksha.*

As already indicated *Purusha-pariksha* of Chanda Jha is a translation of Vidyapati's well-known work in Sanskrit bearing the same title. In his translation, Chanda Jha has given Maithili verse for Sanskrit verse and Maithili prose for Sanskrit prose. A look at his translation is enough to convince that he entertained queer ideas about what a translation should be like. By and large, he went on putting word for word making the construction at times almost ludicrous. For example, in Sanskrit prose a finite verbc an be placed anywhere in a sentence; not so

in Modern Indian languages. But Chanda Jha did this in good many cases. He did this possibly due to the absence of a suitable model on which the translation work could be based. Taking liberty with a word in verses being more or less permissible, his translation of Sanskrit verse into Maithili verse was more satisfactory than his translation of Sanskrit prose into Maithili prose. Besides, he was a poet by instinct and this stood him in good stead in his translation from Sanskrit verses. We have already considered extracts from the introduction to Chanda Jha's *Purusha-pariksha*. This introduction seems to give the impression that it was added by the Manager of the press printing the book, though from its tone it is almost certain that Chanda Jha himself wrote it. For, he has expressed there his heartfelt anguish at pandits pursuing studies of Sanskrit to the utter neglect of the mother tongue. As a person who had to some extent imbibed the spirit of the Renaissance this neglect was too much to be viewed with complacency. It was in this context that he proceeded also to produce a prose work in Maithili.

But we must clearly remember that however pioneer a work Chanda Jha might have done in the field of Maithili prose by his translation of *Purusha-pariksha,* his reputation as a literary figure rests mainly on his poetry.

5. LITERARY EVALUATION

In the very nature of things, it was quite expected of Chanda Jha to follow the time-honoured story of the *Ramayana,* namely Rama's birth, arrival of Visvamitra at Dasaratha's court, seeking permission to take away Rama to the forest to drive away the demons, Rama's going to Janakapur and marrying Sita after breaking Siva's bow, Kaikeyi's pleadings with Dasaratha to send Rama to the forest and in his place to install Bharata, her own son, on the throne, Sita following Rama to the forest, Dasaratha's death, Sita's kidnapping by Ravana, Rama's friendship with Sugriba, Hanumana's feat of crossing the sea and finding out Sita, his unparallelled bravery in Lanka, march of the monkey-army to Lanka, death of Ravana and his

kinsmen, return of Rama and Sita to Ayodhya to the joy of all.

While this pattern of the story was well known in the Mithila region, as elsewhere, it did not receive as much literary treatment as its importance warranted. It took unduly long time for the Rama-cult to be properly institutionalised and thus popularised among the common people in the Mithila region.

In Mithila we had a galaxy of competent writers and poets in the medieval period, but we do not have many writers who wrote on the subject of Rama. The two exceptions, so to say, are Bhavanatha and Yajnapati. The former wrote a drama on the subject of Rama and the latter only a *mangalasloka* (an invocation) which, as was the convention, was to preface every work worth the name. It is strange that even in such stray and casual writing as a *mangalasloka* Rama could not be thought of, although we have examples of every conceivable god or goddess invoked in this connection. Maybe, the prevalence of Sakti worship had something to do with this. The fact that more or less similar position obtained in almost the whole of eastern region comprising Mithila, Bengal, Assam and Orissa lends support to the view that attachment to Sakti-cult worked like a damper to Rama-cult striking deep roots. Besides, Mithila remained under the spell of scholasticism and since Ramananda-cult mostly spread through the medium of the vernacular, it could not make an impact on Mithila quite for some time.

Rama-cult seems to have made an inroad into Mithila in the eighteenth century through the installation of the Mahanthas. Those Mahanthas mostly belonged to Ramananda sect and were devotees of Rama as a symbol of the highest godhead. As these Mahanthas were generally well-to-do, they could patronise Rama worship. This led to a large number of people, mostly semi-literate, to accept the new religious practice. Thus a new wave of Rama-cult, however limited in scope, seized the area. Naturally this section which was more or less free from the scholastic constraints found in it a haven of religious fulfilment.

Since Chanda Jha's venture of producing a Ramayana in Maithili was quite new, obviously he required to have a model

on which to base his work. Classicist as he was, this model could either be *Valmiki Ramayana* or *Adhyatma Ramayana*. Also there was a third *Ramayana* available, namely of Tulasidasa. But as a confirmed classicist, Chanda Jha was not expected to accept it as a model. Besides, Chanda Jha, in a way, was out to prepare almost a substitute for *Rama-Charit-Manas* of Tulasidasa. So its acceptance for the purpose was out of the question. He could not accept Valmiki for the simple reason that Valmiki as a great classic was too difficult to be emulated and left little room for manoeuvre so as to bring it to the level of the common man. In the circumstances, *Adhyatma Ramayana* was the only model left to him.

This is not to suggest that Chanda Jha followed *Adhyatma Ramayana* slavishly. He not only introduced his own changes but also adopted descriptions from Valmiki and other *Ramayanas*. For example, so far as marriage between Rishyasringa and Santa is concerned, he followed Valmiki rather than *Adhyatma Ramayana* which has not given details of the marriage. Again, while describing seasons like *sarda* and *varsha* (rains) he has almost translated Valmiki word for word. It is not that he avoided Tulasidasa altogether. If a particular portion of Tulasidasa appealed to him, he made full use of it. In this way while adhering to *Adhyatma Ramayana* basically he tried to improve his composition by utilizing whatever source he thought he could use with profit.

We have also to remember that *Adhyatma Ramayana* fell within the four corners of the Ramanada-cult. Apart from the special rituals connected with this cult, it viewed Rama as the supreme godhead and considered muttering of his name not only extremely meritorious but also an end in itself. As a *Panchadevopasaka* (worshipper of Ganesa, Surya, Durga, Visnu and Siva) Chanda Jha could not accept the rituals in toto and was comparatively free from the set religious objective the lovers of *Adhyatma Ramayana* strongly prescribed. Naturally Chanda Jha had a longer tether to go about and he used his undoubted power of imagination, and what was perhaps more important than this, he kept his eyes and ears open to imbibe whatever was there of value in the life around him. In the process he took

up not only the myths and legends current among the people but also their language and idioms. In this way there was a direct relationship established between the larger Mithila society and his work. This intimate relationship with what is often called the 'book of the people' brought in a quality whose appeal was immediate.

What had almost become a passion with Chanda Jha was his abiding love for Mithila. He seemed to have been saying to himself 'Mithila with all thy fault I love thee.' He did not only love Mithila with its rich past but also with its present traditionalism, its social inequalities, its uglinesses. In order that he may not outrage the sentiment of the Mithila society he, at times, departed from his original. For example, he could not think of Mandodari delivering a long lecture to her husband, Ravana. Except for an extreme love for Mithila we could not have from him some of the best pieces of poetry. Really Mithila and anything belonging to Mithila sent him into raptures and he sang easily and full-throatedly.

In spite of the fact that Chanda Jha was a classicist and given to narrating episodes in *chaupai, soratha, doha* etc., he had a peculiar tendency to sing. This singing quality in his poetry is everywhere in evidence. We know from details of his life that he composed a few songs daily, particularly on the subject of Siva and sang them feelingly, and ultimately took them to the court. In the court, we know, the professional musicians would set them to music to the satisfaction of the poet. Apart from his tendency to sing which was duly reflected in his poetry, he, it can be gathered from his writings, had an excellent grounding in the theory of music. It appears he had made a deep study of the different schools of music. Naturally his interest in the Mithila school of music was the greatest. His tendency to use ever new *chhanda* in the *Ramayana* and elsewhere was partly due to his knowledge of music, theoretical as well as practical. He divided his *Ramayana* into *Adhyayas* instead of *sargas*. By this device he got greater opportunities to use the whole host of *chhanda* he had known in course of his studies of the Sanskrit classics and the life around him. Chanda Jha was essentially a man of the village and had known folk tunes in plenty. In this

way, he was equipped with a rich fund of musical knowledge which could be expressed only by recourse to ever new experiment. To give a few examples at random, we have his composition in *Srichhanda, Kedara chhanda,* and *Parvatiya Baradiya chhanda.* What may be remembered here is that the poet has almost in every case referred to the particular school of music according to whose rules it is to be sung. Naturally references to Mithila school of music abounds.

Chanda Jha's partiality for Mithila showed itself in another direction. Apart from abridging the passages of prayers in the *Adhyatma Ramayana* he also made changes in the name of the place where a particular incident is said to have taken place. In the *Adhyatma Ramayana* Rama has been described as having brought to life Ahalya on the bank of the Ganga. But Chanda Jha knew the Ganga to be flowing on the southern fringe of Mithila. Evidently, this description did not satisfy him. Fortunately for him just about six miles north to his village Pindaruch lay a place called 'Ahalya Sthana' which was traditionally known to be the place where "Ahalya" miracle took place and he at once accepted it for utilisation in his *Ramayana.* He might have perhaps thought that the fit place for the miracle to take place was the heart of Mithila and not a fringe of it. Wherever possible Chanda Jha introduced in the *Ramayana* the special customs prevalent in Mithila society. Except for a partiality on his part we could not have in the *Ramayana* descriptions of *Siddhanta* (a certificate of eligibility from an authorised genealogist to the effect that the parties to the proposed marriage are not within the prohibited degrees of relationship) before the marriage, of *Parichhani* (welcome to bridegroom with special rituals) of Rama before he was brought to the spot where the rituals of marriage were gone through, of the role of the *ghataka* (the go-between), of singing of *samadaunti* (a tune with extremely melancholy note appropriate to the occasion of departure) by ladies at the time of Sita leaving Janakapur for Ayodhya, of Rama's *chumaon* (welcome) ceremony on his arrival from Lanka, *kumari-puja* before the ceremony of coronation, etc. In this way the poet has lent a Maithila colour to the whole work. It is not that only the functions taking place

in Mithila were given appropriate local colour. Rama's *chumaon* was gone through even at Ayodhya on his return from Lanka. Chanda Jha might have thought that since Rama had accepted Sita, a Maithila girl, as his better half, it was only natural that he should follow the customs and rituals Sita must have brought with her to her new home. Rama, in Chanda Jha's view, was no longer a Kosala-boy. In a most effective sense he was a son-in-law of Mithila, ready to abide by whatever rituals a girl of Mithila wanted him to observe. All this was not possible except for a personal feeling with which Chanda Jha viewed the whole thing.

No doubt Chanda Jha described the marriage between Rama and Sita, as also what preceded and followed it, keeping the details strictly on the mundane and social plane, at the back of his mind there always was a realisation that really they were *Prakrti* and *Purusha.* A man of religion as he was, this realisation never left him. Again and again he hammers this truth into the reader's brain. As soon as Rama was born, Mother Kausalya became a witness to Rama's supernatural qualities.

Seeing the child with supernatural features,
Kausalya burst into tears in supreme ecstasy
Imploring him with folded hands.[1]

On that occasion it was impossible for the poet not to feel as Mother Kausalya is described to have felt.

Clouds dropped flowers, for the very root of universe had
taken birth.
He was dark, like the petals of blue-lotus
And had four hands, and wrappings of gold-colour.
His eyes were red like lotus and he was bedecked
with ear-rings.

1. Kauśalyā dekhala sakala, adabhuta bālaka bhela
Kahalani se karajoḍi ke, kanaita harṣaka lela.
Mat. Aka. Edn., p. 16

He was effulgent like thousand suns;
On His lock of curling hair rested a shining crown.
With Sankha, Chakra, Gada and Padma, in the four hands
He was smiling, and was bedecked with Vanamala.
His eyes, outshining even the blue-lotus,
were full of compassion.[1]

All this leaves no room for doubt as to who really the babe is and she begins praying :

I offer thee my repeated oblation, for I'm but
A woman, a veritable abode of ignorance.
In offering thee prayers, I'm quite at loss
To find suitable words, for I know
Thou art beyond the reach of
words, intellect or mind.
Really thou art the cause, the substance and the
end of the universe,
Turning round and round on the
chariot of Maya'[2]

Bewildered and non-plussed as Mother Kausalya is, she is careful enough to ask two boons befitting the occasion. First, she prays that she may be granted a capacity to have unflinching love for the Lord ever hereafter. Secondly, she wants the baby to assume at once a normal form.

1. Vārida varisala takhanā phūla janma lela sabha saṁpati mūla
nilotpala-dala śyāmala rāja, cāri subhuja kankāmbara bhrāja,
aruṇa jalaja vara sundara nayana, kuṇḍala maṇḍita sobhā ayana
sahasa sūra sana suchavi prakāśa, kuṭila alaka sumukuṭa bhala bhāsa
saṅkha rathāṅga gadā jala-jāta,, vanamālī smitamukha avadāta
nayana karuṇa rasasau paripūra, indīvara sobhā kara dūra
Mai. Aka. Edn., p. 16

2. vāra vāra hama kariya praṇāma, hama abalā ajnānaka dhāma
vacana buddhi mana pahuca na jataya, stuti hama ki karaba
phuraya na tataya
racanā, pālana pralaya, svatantra, viśva caḷala bhala māyā yantra
Mai. Aka. Edn,, p. 16-17

As expected, the baby assumes the normal form and reminds Kausalya how she and Dasaratha performed penance to have Vishnu Himself as their son. All these descriptions really set the tone for the work, for Chanda Jha never for a moment forgot that he was after all out to describe the doings of the Lord of the universe who, out of compassion for the mortals, had condescended to assume a human form. This attachment to a religious overtone has at times affected his poetry but it could not be helped in a poet like Chanda Jha.

Next to religious overtone was his passion for Mithila and everything belonging to Mithila. Naturally this predilection on his part had several shades, making the work naturalised to Mithila atmosphere. Right from the time Rama places his foot on the Mithila soil on his way to Janakapur to attend the Svayambara the poet puts in Rama's mouth eulogizing words in regard to whatever he comes across. At the first sight of Mithila, Rama addresses Lakshmana like this :

What a beautiful land of Mithila
have we reached!
The very sight O Lakshmana! has evoked
a sense of beatitude.

What a noble sight do the flowers, the plants,
and the unending rice-fields present
To the accompaniment of the outpourings into
songs by birds.[1]

It was not only the landscape of Mithila that attracted his notice. He was no less attracted by 'plain living and high thinking' of the people at large.

Virtually a creation of rivers, Mithila
is full of luxuriant vegetation.

1. Kī divya bhūmi Mithilā hama ābi gelau
dekhaita mātra mana Lakṣmaṇa tṛpta bhelaū
kī divya phūla phala vṛkṣa ananta dhāma
pakṣī vilakṣaṇa karai achi ramya gāna.

Mai. Aka. Edn., p, 28

Rains come in time, leading Mithila
to become a veritable granary.
All men are strong, kind and clean in behaviour.
Verily, Mithila is an ocean of wisdom to the
knowledge of the world.[1]

It seems the poet was in his elements when he spoke in the context of Mithila or anything belonging to it. The context affected him emotionally and his undoubted fund of lyricism was powerfully stirred. If this was true of the poet generally, it was more so in respect of Sita, the rarest product of the Mithila soil. As a daughter of Mithila, she was made of the same clay as the poet himself. In the circumstance, to him nothing could be more heart-rending than this noblest daughter of Mithila not being able to find a suitable husband in the absence of a prince capable enough to break Siva's bow :

There's no way out, the ladies say,
overpowered with grief.
King's vow is really indefensible,
There being incompatibility between Siva's bow and man.
Sita will, verily remain unwed ;
Such never had been the case before.
All the ladies sat crest-fallen,
As the prowess of the princes, one by one, was being tested.
Satananda spoke out, the earth is
bereft of the brave.[2]
Indeed, Videha shouldn't have committed the mistake.

1. nadī-matṛka kṣetra sundara śasya sau sampanna
samaya sira para hoya varṣā bahuta sancita anna
nyāyayut nara sakala sundara svaccha sabha vyavahāra
sakala-vidyā-udadhi Mithilā vidita bhari saṁsāra,
Mai. Aka. Edn., p. 29

2. āba na rahala upāya, vanitā-gaṇa mana vikala kaha
bhupati paṇa anyāya, kataya Śambhu-dhanu manuṣa kata
kanyā rahali kumari anucita ehana na bhela chala
sabha baisali mana hāri, nṛpati sakala bala bujhi paṛala
Śatānanda bajalāha, ahaha āha nirvīra mahi
bhala karaita adhalāha, homaya na bhūjha videha kā.
Mai. Aka. Edn., p. 40

But this mood of despondency and gloom was only short-lived. No doubt, Lakshmana was provoked a good deal by the disparaging terms in which Janaka spoke of the valour of the princes assembled in his court, but Rama, with smile on his lips, beckoned him to keep quiet. Meanwhile Visvamitra asked Rama to break the great bow, if not for anything, at least to relieve Janaka of his worries:

Rama, in opportune moment beckoned
His younger brother to keep quiet,
Though telling him nothing by words of mouth.
And Kausika asked Raghuvar to lift the
bow to relieve Janaka of his despondency.[1]

As expected, Rama does as he is desired to do by his *guru*. The great bow is broken by him so easily and this leads to his marriage with Sita in an atmosphere of complete joyousness. But soon a period of utmost gloom follows, for Sita is ready to depart:

With her eyes full of tears, Janaki went to meet the mother
She couldn't check her tears which flowed incessantly.[2]
When shall I see again my daughter and my son-in-law ?
Mother asked with tears never drying up in her eyes.
Ladies sang 'Samdauni' to bid farewell,
Weeping all the while.[2]

Chanda Jha's attachment to Sita was double-edged. He knew her to be none else than Adisakti. But she was also a daughter

1. Smita-mukha Rāma na bajalā, anuja nihāri
cestahi kayala nivaraṇa, samaya vicāri
Kauśika kahalani Raghuvara dhanuṣa uṭhau
pūriya Janaka-manoratha ādhi metāu

Mai. Aka. Edn., p. 41

2. sajala-nayana Janaki milu māya, locana jala baha rahala na jāya
dekhaba kona pari putri-jamāya, kahukhana nora na ākhi sukhāya
samadauni gāyini-gaṇa gāba, kakarā nayana nora nahi āba.

Mai. Aka. Edn., p. 49

of Mithila. A realisation of the two capacities of Sita really overwhelmed him. He considered it extremely meritorious that Adiśakti should have chosen Mithila as the fittest place where to assume a human form. Thus in his mind there was a queer mixture of extreme reverence and tender solicitude for Sita. When this was so in regard to Sita, it could not be otherwise in regard to Rama who, apart from being Vishnu, was also a son-in-law of Mithila. The coronation of Rama also meant equally the coronation of Sita. Evidently, the occasion was bound to be viewed with delicate concern by the poet lest some mishap should creep in to disturb the arrangement. To ward off the possible mishap, he has made Kausalya pray to Gauri :

> May thou so manage Mother
> That the King may remain steadfast in his resolve;
> That my cherished desire may be fulfilled
> And Kaikeyi remain unprotesting.
> King's heart is unsteady and unrestrained;
> I'm thus assailed by apprehensions, considering
> What my co-wife, a veritable cobra, may do.
> Thou art Sankari and I, thy maid;
> Whilst I live. let my devotion to thy lotus-feet
> remain unshaken.
> That Rama, the spouse of Sita, would be coronated,
> Nothing could be dearer to my heart than this.[1]

The appeal of these lines is universal only to the extent the poet has been able to imbue them with personal feelings. At times we have the impression that he is completely at one with

1. se karu devi dāyamayi he, thira raha mahārāja
pūriya hamara manoratha he, Kekayi nahi bāja
nṛpatika hṛdaya kakara vaśa he, kakoro nahi mīta
sautini sāmari sāpini he, mana ho bhayabhīta
tua śankari hama kinkari he, yāvata raha deha,
tua pada-kamala niyata raha he, mora acala sineha
Ramacandra Sītāpati he, hoyatā yuvarāja
tṛbhuvana āna ehana sana he, nahi hita mora kāja.
Mai. Aka. Edn., p. 61

his characters and is seized by the same feelingsas the characters themselves. This capacity of the poet is unique considering the fact that in the *Ramayana* he had set characters leaving little room for manoeuvre. Evidently, he had also the option to exploit the verbal strength of his mothertongue and this he did in full measure. By this he not only brought his composition near to the common man but also pleased the section of elite that cared for composition in the mother-tongue. Chanda Jha might not have been able to make his work even throughout but by and large he has been able to narrate with fluency and liveliness. The dignified flow of his typical Maithili idioms and phrases suggesting coherence of thought and feelings, adds charm to his utterences. The original Maithili has to be read in order to appreciate how Chanda Jha could convey an atmosphere by means of suitable vocabulary and turn a simple narrative into a piece of real poetry :

> On Bharata declining to accept kingship,
> It was given out by beat of drum
> That Bharata would not accept kingship;
> That he would go on foot along with his younger brother
> To bring back Rama.
> Army with horses and elephants proceeded, along
> With Vasistha, Brahmins and queens led by Kausalya.
> Kaikeyi perched on palaquin
> And remembering her misdeed
> Wished to sink into the womb of the earth
> Only if it could give way.
> 'I have, O God,' thought she,
> 'Put my son and daughter-in-law,[1]

1. sagara nagara me bājala dankā Bharata na rājā hayatā
ānaya hetu Rāma nṛpa-vara kā payarahi sānuja jayatā
senā sabha taiyāra calaya sanga, sājala ghoṛā hāthī
guru Vaśiṣṭha dvija-gaṇa maharāni, Kauśalyādika jāthi
caḷala lālakī Kekayi rāni, sumari sumari nija karanī
jai patāla tehana ho lajjā, phāti jathi jau dharaṇī
ha vidhi guṇanidhi putra putohuka kayala durdaśā bhāri
Raghunandana Lakṣmaṇa kī kahatā ki kahati Janaka-dulārī.
Mai. Aka. Edn., p. 108

The abodes of virtues, to untold worry:
What shall Rama and Lakshmana think of me?'

Or we may notice the portion of the *Ramayana* in which Hanumana has assured Sita in Asoka Batika of his great capacity to end her trouble at once.

I'm not permitted to do all I could:
Otherwise I would have uprooted Lanka
And placed it before the feet of the Master.
I would have made the ten-headed Ravana
fall at my feet,
Moved him all the world by tying him to my tail.
Period of sorrow, Mother, is fast coming to an end
For very soon, Ravana and all his ilk will die,
And vultures and crows shall enjoy themselves by
placing themselves in Lanka.[1]

Perhaps nowhere has Chanda Jha acquitted himself better than at the place where he has exploited the playfulness, combined with dignity, of which his mother tongue was capable. On being captured and presented before Ravana Hanuman says:

I was hungry and had nothing to eat and so
I ate the fruits.
When the cruel gardeners fell upon me to kill
I implored them a good deal.
I did not care for my head or ears
And hid myself behind every leaf available.
Subsequently I assumed my form
And sent them all to the other world.

1. nahi achi ajnā tehana, jehana hama kautaka karitahu
Lankāpurī ukhāṛi prabhuka pada laga laya dharitahu
Daśamukhasau kaya beri apana duhu payara dharabitahu
lāngaṛi me lapatāya bāndhi sabha loka paṭhabitahu
janani thoṛa dina vipati achi, sakula sadala Rāvaṇa marata
gṛddha kākagaṇa magana-mana, Lankāpura ḍerā karata.
Mai. Aka. Edn., p. 200

I tolerated a good deal in the beginning
But later I did all you have accused me of.
You should not have, King of Lanka, got irritated.
I was a monkey, all alone
And you sent a full army against me.
Well versed in Sastra, you should do justice
rather than lose balance.[1]

Method of conciliation having failed, there remained no alternative to marching the army into Lanka. From the tone of the description given by the poet it is clear that Rama, who was otherwise an embodiment of poise and dignity, became the very embodiment of enthusiasm and urgency at the time of the march to Lanka. Rama says :

I am ready to start to kill the
ten-headed Ravana;
I will kill all the great *raksasas*
to relieve the earth of a sure burden.
I will make the sages free from anxiety
And will bring back the daughter of Videha.[2]

This sort of dignified description is to be found everywhere in the *Ramayana*. Although written in the form of an epic, he introduced a style which was quite subtle and impassioned.

1. bhūkhala chalahu sanga nahi kharacā, toṛi toṛi phala khayalahu
rakṣaka laṇṭha prāṇa lebāpara bahuta nehorā kayalahu
kāna kaṛāra eka nahi būjhala, pate pata nukayalahu
apana svarūpa dhayala hama sabha kā kālakadhāma paṭhayalahu
pahile māri bahuta hama sahalahu, pāchā anucita kayalahu
Daśamastaka Lankāpati rāja ki apane khisialahu
eka got vānara para ete senā vyartha pathayalahu,
dharmaśāstra vettā apane sana, nyāya karū agutayalahu.
Mai. Aka. Edn., p. 209-10

2. hamahu calaba ehi kāla, kāla Daśabhālahi māraba
māraba baṛa baṛa danuja, bhāra bhumīka utāraba
tāraba hama muniloka, videha-tanūjā ānaba.
Mai. Aka. Edn., p. 225

We are really fortunate that he gave us an epic of such magnitude and elegance.

In order to understand Chanda Jha it is essential that we should also consider his devotional songs. The devotional songs of Chanda Jha are many and they are addressed to many gods and goddesses—Rama, Sita, Syama, Ganesa, Siva, Parvati etc. But clearly those dealing with Siva are more numerous than others.

We have already noted how the genius of the poet was fettered by a necessity to conform to a pattern both in regard to subject-matter as well as vehicle of expression. No doubt he introduced changes wherever, in answer to his urges, he could. But essentially the scope for change was limited. In the songs, however, he had wider scope to express himself—his passions, his joys, his sufferings. This was quite in contrast with the formality under which he had to function while writing the epic of the *Ramayana*. Really the *Mehesavanis* are the expression of the popular genius of the poet, combined with an awakened sense of humanity. Although in them the underlying tone is of religious fervour they also echo the wretchedness of the common-man's life which he knew intimately and which he was out to express in a particular context. His own misfortunes throughout his life have their echo here and there but they have not been able to damp his general cheerfulness, his capacity to enjoy incongruities in life. Added to this was the capacity of the poet to bring in multitude of words, idioms and phrases from his mother tongue that were picturesque, familiar and racy of the soil. By this he could bring out meanings which it was impossible for him to do by recourse to classical diction. Here Siva, as a picture of incongruity and waywardness, suited him all right.

It is not that his songs concerning Sita are less enjoyable. They clearly embody his animated utterances. The fact that he considered Sita as a girl of Mithila gave a new dimension to his poetry by a necessity to import details from life around him.

Now Janaki thou should come to see thy father's place;
Thy mother has turned too old

And out of motherly love
Casts longing looks towards thee ;
Nobody traverses the path
Prescribed by thy father ;
For, all neglect the path of duty.
In the absence of plenty to eat
People remember thee and sing praise of thee.
Chandrakavi implores thee to be compassionate
And save people from going astray.[1]

He considers it extremely fortunate that Prakrti and Purusha should have chosen Mithilas a place where to take 'avatara' and be united. All the same the necessity arose of Sita, as a daughter, leaving Mithila for her new home. Naturally on this occasion his fatherly feelings are aroused and he sings with an emotion, an eloquence and a lyric ardour reaching a new height:

The king of Tirhut has fulfilled his vow
And when the Master of the three worlds
Has been got as son-in-law
Nothing more remains to be desired.

It was through Janaki that
We saw face to face Prakrti and Purusha
And today when she is ready to depart
All my senses stand benumbed.

As I see Janaki's eyes full of tears
What has really happened to me that
I can't check my own tears, flowing incessantly ?

1. Janaki naihara dekhaba āba
māya bahuta burhi sahalanhi patha ḍhurhi tanayā prakṛtisvabhāba
Janaka nṛpati mata ek nahi anurata vidharama patha mana dhāba
annaka dukha jana bahuta malina tana anukhana tava guṇa gāba
candra sukavi bhana karu jana parasana ke āba dharama vacāba.
Chandra Padyavali, p. 30

Ladies who came to sing 'samadauni'
Have all their clothes wet with tears.[1]

If Sita touched the poet's heart as a daughter of Mithila, Siva touched him totally. Wherever he looked, he found the prevailing conditions identical with those that were true of Siva himself—poverty, incongruity, waywardness. Also he saw no other means to relieve the distress except to seek His mercy which he knew. He would never refuse. In the circumstances, Chanda Jha made him a citizen of Mithila, observing the same customs, the same rules as the people of Mithila observed. In describing details of His marriage, of the management of His household, the poet has imported freely from Mithila life. Here the poet made greater use of the idioms of Maithili. This type of poetry being directly addressed to the common man, the use of idioms and phrases from the mother tongue proved extremely expressive.

At the time of marriage of Siva, Narada, as go-between, has been described as promising to bring articles required at the time of marriage. But nothing was brought, and naturally the ladies, particularly the mother felt extremely irritated and annoyed. The mother is ready to accept the blame that she turned away the prospective bridegroom from her doorstep rather than allow Siva, who was unequal to Parvati in every respect, to marry her.

Fie on the go-between who is still sticking to my door.
Let him go back with the whole entourage,
For I won't agree to the marriage taking place,
Due to clear incompatibility between Gauri
And that naked Mahadeva.

1. Tirhutipati paṇa sakala nivāhala, Raghunandana raṇasūra
bhelāha jamāya jakhana tṛbhuvana-pati sakala manoratha pūra
prakṛti-puruṣa-mukha darasana anukhana Janaki sabha sukha dela
pāhuni banala calali priyatama gṛha mora mana mati hari lela
sajala jalaja Janaki duhu locana mukha-vidhu dekhayita tora
śubha śubha samaya hṛdaya mora ki bhela nayana akhaṇḍita nora
samadauni gāyini mili gābathi nore vasana gela tīti
bhana Kavi Chandra Janaka-yuga-locana jaladhara sarisa pratīti.
Chanda Pady, p. 33

The bridegroom is wayward
And none of the articles promised by Narada is to be seen.[1]

Chanda Jha can be very eloquent when speaking of the loathsome physical features of Siva when he came to marry the accomplished daughter of Himalaya. It presented a contrast like which it was impossible to notice elsewhere. It was natural that this contrast should give rise to a lot of misgivings in the mind of the ladies who came to extend a welcome to the bridegroom and his party regarding the future of the bride :

I hadn't ever heard of sacred-thread made of snake;
Nor of a garland of bones;
Nor was bridegroom heard
As relishing *Bhanga* and *Dhutur* to the exclusion
of delicacies.

With a sacred-thread of snake
And water-pot of skull,
And the Ganga flowing from head,
Pasupati presents a queer sight.[2]

At places the poet has used bunch of idioms to bring into relief the unassailable position Siva occupied as a son-in-law. It was only as a son-in-law that Siva could be tolerated to leave

1. dhanya dhanya O ghaṭaka mahāśaya aṭakala chathi kī dvāra
vara variāta sahita ghuri jāthu se mora ne vivāha vicāra
kakaro kalaha-vacana nahi mānaba ayasa karaba angikāra
kataya Gauri kata tapasi Digambara vidhi ghatanā duravāra
Girivara bhavana ābi Narada muni je sabha kayala karāra
se sabha vastu eka nahi gocara, varaka viśama vyavahāra.
Chandra Pady., p. 40

2. sāpaka janau janama bhari sunala na dekhala na hāṛaka hāra
madhura virāga lāga ruci nahi kichu bhānga dhathūra ahāra
chanahi me vyālaka janau banābathi jalabhājana nṛkapala
adbhuta gati Paśupatika dekhipaṛa jaṭā vaha surasari dhāra.
Chandra Pady., p. 83

his ox free to roam about damaging precious corn. At any other place people would certainly make his life a hell on earth.

The ox roams about all free
Damaging corn-field or corn stack ;
And if anybody approaches him to drive away
He retaliates running amuck towards him,
Since Siva can't accept anything except him
The trouble is sure to remain for ever.
As a son-in-law deserving highest consideration
Nobody can think of lodging a protest.
His ghosts look after the ox
And they like to damage other's interest.
Siva can't appreciate loss of corn
Since all he eats is only Bhanga and Dhutur.[1]

In spite of his strange make-up and unelegant behaviour Chanda Jha knew Siva to be the supreme godhead. He also knew Him to be extremely kind and compassionate. He had, therefore, no difficulty in singing from his heart, laying bare all his faults and blemishes in the full hope that He will make him cross easily the ocean of the world.

I am O Mahadeva, bereft of all virtues
I'm worthless, only capable of weaving rings of
    insincere words.
Born to a good family in Mithila, although
A poet, living in the company of scholars
And serving the prince of Mithila
What low deed have I not done in my youth ?
On small provocations I have troubled *sadhu* ;

1. kheta kharihāna garībaka jīvana vasahā anene khāya
ākhi mūni puni māraya dauṛaya kyo nahi romaya jāya
Śiva kā āna abhiṣṭa na vāhana ī dukha rahala sadāya
kyo uparāga kathi le detā baṛa gota mānya jamāya
bhūta preta carabāha bahuta achi sabha kā pṛya anyāya
anna ka dukha Paśupati nahi bujhathi bhānga dhathūra cibāya,
Chandra Pady., p. 83

And have prided on my wealth, although poor ;
I have spent time piling words upon words
And now Mahesa, what can I do ?
Says Kavi Chandra it is only the spouse of Girija
Who can protect in this wretched Kaliyuga.[1]

1. Mahādeva mora tana nahi guṇa leśa
vyāja vacana racanāka dhurandhara, guṇa vinu gobaraganeśa
yadapi janma Maithilā kula uttama vasalahu Mithilā deśa
Kavi bani Paṇḍita gaṇa sanga rahalahu sevala nṛpa Mithileśa
kī kī nīca karma nahi kaelahu taruṇa vayasa paravesa
laghu aparadhahi sādhu satāola dhana vina garaba dhanesa
kāṭala kāla jāla gālahi sau ābaki karaba Maheśa,
bhana Kavi Candra manda kalikāla me rakṣā karu Girijeśa.
Chandra Pady., pp. 77-78